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*THE PROTESTANT-CATHOLIC DIVIDE ON  
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND, CANADA:  
ITS CREATION, GROWTH AND RESOLUTION*

By

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Submitted for the Degree of PhD in Religious Studies

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis traces the origin and growth of the sectarian divide between Protestants and Catholics on Prince Edward Island, situating it in the wider context of Canada's Atlantic Provinces, the north-eastern United States and Britain. All of these areas had relatively good relations between Protestants and Catholics from 1780 to the mid-1830s, then experienced a period of intense sectarian conflict into the late 1870s, but thereafter the Atlantic provinces took a unique path in managing sectarian tensions.

The event which brought buried religious animosities to the surface on P.E.I. was the Belfast Riot of 1847. These negative feelings grew until a sectarian firestorm was ignited by the Bible Question of 1856. For the next two decades battles over religion and education kept the two groups so divided that for much of that time political affiliation was determined by religion.

The education wars were resolved by 1877, but the sectarian tensions that fuelled them were only sublimated through the use of elite accommodation and the implementation of a *de facto* separate school system. These 'gentlemen's agreements' circumscribed relations between the two denominations on the Island for the next eighty years. They proved quite effective in keeping the peace but with the side effect of institutionalizing religious division in the society. A second round of education battles (1957-69) ended the separate school system and was the main factor in healing the divide on P.E.I.

This work's uniqueness lies primarily in its focus on the Belfast Riot as a seminal event in articulating sectarian division, and in its extensive use of oral history in the study of Protestant-Catholic relations. Its main contribution, in addition to enhancing understanding of P.E.I.'s history and Protestant-Catholic relations in general, is in suggesting a frame of reference for similar oral research to be done in other religiously-divided communities.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation was completed under the guidance of Prof J.R. Wolffe, Dr Marion Bowman and Dr Edward MacDonald. It was from beginning to end a pleasure to work with all three. They were unfailingly insightful, helpful, supportive and understanding.

I would also like to thank Paul O'Connor for his support throughout this process and especially his help in developing the map in the Appendix; John Eldon Green for his time and insights; my P.E.I. Seniors College students and my senior correspondents for their stories and feedback; my University students for their help in researching papers and conducting interviews; Simon Lloyd and Leo Cheverie, archivists at U.P.E.I., for their patience in assisting me in conducting my research; and Dr David Weale for his foresight in having his students interview Island old timers about 'them times,' for keeping their reports and for allowing me to use this invaluable material.

Most of all I want to thank my wife who continually encouraged me in this work, who carefully read and edited all I wrote, who worked so faithfully to keep our financial ship afloat while I was busy researching, and with whom I spent countless enjoyable hours discussing all the new "stuff" that I was learning.

This work is dedicated to my mother, whose emotional and financial support throughout this process was unstinting, and to my late father, whose efforts in bridging the divide in the universities and hospitals on the Island was the catalyst for the topic I chose.

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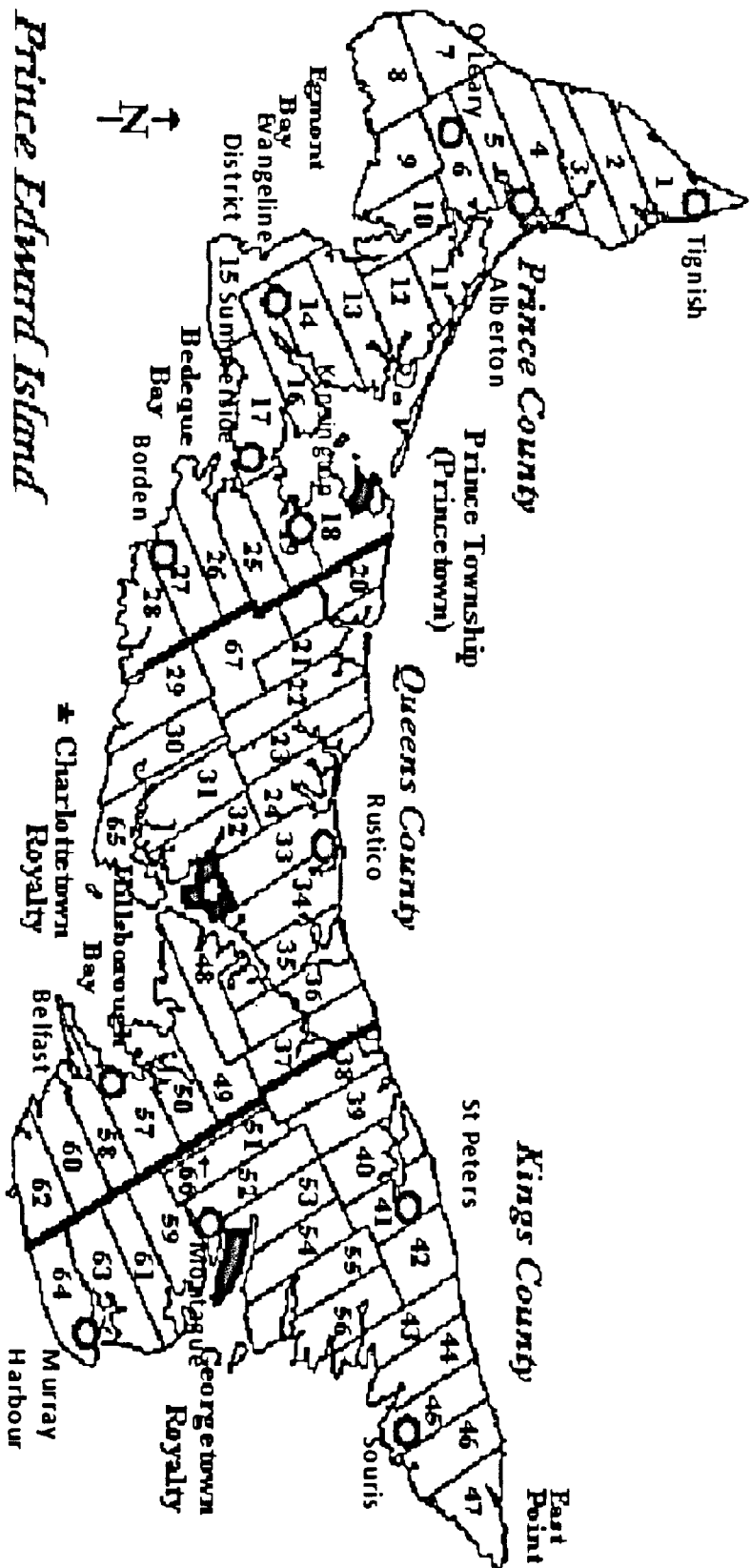
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MAP OF COUNTIES, LOTS AND IMPORTANT COMMUNITIES ON P.E.I.



Introduction  
and  
Literature Review

We have heard from the Hon member for Charlottetown – that this feeling is but in its infancy – I trust that it will die so, and never again attain stature or growth. There should not be these distinctions on account of creed, and he is the enemy of man who would go about saying to the peaceful people of the Island “vote for this man, he is a Presbyterian;” or, “do not vote for that man, he is a Catholic.” The man who does this is an enemy, **and were we to look closely perhaps we should see the cloven foot** (Politician Robert Mooney in his comments on the Belfast Riot, Royal Gazette, Mar 16, 1847).

## Introduction

Of all the great sociological changes that took place in my home province of Prince Edward Island during the twentieth century perhaps the most profound began to take shape in the mid-1960s when the dividing wall between its two main faith groups, Protestants and Roman Catholics, began to be dismantled. Island historian David Weale has dubbed this “the mend”;<sup>1</sup> my preferred terminology is “the bridging of the Protestant - Catholic divide.” Before “the mend” the officially non-sectarian public school system on the Island<sup>2</sup> was unofficially a sectarian one; most people patronized doctors, dentists, pharmacies, hospitals and sometimes even businesses which shared their denominational affiliation; Catholics<sup>3</sup> and Protestants tended to live in their own little enclaves; dances were usually segregated while inter-faith dating and marriage were decidedly taboo; and gentlemen’s agreements governed patronage appointments, even to how many Catholics and Protestants would get elected. All of this came to an end in the last four decades of the twentieth century, the key turning point being the integration of the schools in the capital city of Charlottetown from 1966-9.

The original intention of my research was to investigate how this dramatic sociological shift occurred. My father was the Protestant co-chair of two committees which publically advocated uniting the Catholic and Protestant/public universities and hospitals on P.E.I., so I had a strong personal interest in this topic. In laying the groundwork for the

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<sup>1</sup> David Weale of Charlottetown, interview by author, June 6, 2005, tape recording.

<sup>2</sup> All references to “the Island” in this thesis mean Prince Edward Island.

<sup>3</sup> When I use the term Catholic in this thesis I mean Roman Catholic.

bridging period (1957-82), however, it was recognized that I was biting off too big a slice of history. So it was decided to change the scope of the thesis to cover just how the divide came to be and give but a brief glimpse as to how it was mended.

P.E.I., though it can make no claim to having made any major impact on world history, is not for that reason incapable of making a significant contribution in understanding larger historical events. Due to its small size the historian can do a thorough survey of a large historical period, and yet due to it being a full fledged province of Canada he or she is not just looking at a small out-of-the-way place but a complete society. Two Islanders, who made an impact on the larger stage, make this point. Frank MacKinnon, who taught political science in three Canadian universities and was the principal of Prince of Wales College in Charlottetown, commented that: "The Island is a useful place in which to study priests, parsons, and politicians, it can aid research on larger systems by illustrating ideas and actions on a small scale."<sup>4</sup> Andrew Macphail, McGill University's first professor of the history of medicine, noted that: "James Mavor, that famous geographer and economist, during a visit made the discovery that Prince Edward Island was more than an island, more than a continent even; it was a world in miniature."<sup>5</sup> In carefully tracing out the relations of Protestants and Catholics in this miniature world, and comparing it to what was happening in Britain, Canada and the United States, I was able, for example, to produce a model that is helpful in understanding the historical phases in Protestant-Catholic relations in much of Britain and English-speaking North America.<sup>6</sup>

Frank MacKinnon in 1995 thought the story of Protestant-Catholic conflict on the Island had to be told but doubted such a work would be appreciated:

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<sup>4</sup> Frank MacKinnon, Church Politics and Education in Canada. The P.E.I. Experience (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1995), 12.

<sup>5</sup> Sir Andrew Macphail, The Master's Wife (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1939), 27.

<sup>6</sup> See pp 8ff.

The Island's historical records indicate that open and bitter hostility in church and public life lasted an incredible period, from 1763 to 1880! But the fight did not end; it went underground and kept on going. There is a long sad book to be written on this subject some day, and it is much needed because most islanders know nothing about it, although it has been their biggest problem, preventing P.E.I. from developing as it should. But opposition to its publication would likely be immense . . . .<sup>7</sup>

P.E.I. historian Edward MacDonald suggested six years later that Islanders still were not ready to look at their history of religious conflict:

In choosing to emphasize the qualities that make us all 'Islanders,' an earlier generation of Island historians tended to gloss over our differences . . . town versus country, Catholic versus Protestant, [etc.] . . . We are willing to explore our religious heritage, but . . . we're not yet comfortable talking about religious conflict or intolerance.<sup>8</sup>

Over the last few years I have presented my research in community courses on the Island to five large groups of seniors and discussed my research with numerous people, and I can now affirm that this spirit of discomfort is dead. I have witnessed no negative response to my work and many seem relieved that they can finally freely talk about the divided world in which they were raised. The only negative comments heard in these classes were Catholics criticizing their church or Protestants bemoaning the foibles of their own denomination; party spirit was completely absent. This is a sign of how much attitudes have changed in the last half-century.

The goal of this thesis is to trace the origins, growth and end (the latter very briefly) of the Protestant-Catholic divide on P.E.I. This is not only because of the value it sheds on Island history, filling in a huge component that, as MacDonald noted, is generally ignored, but also because of its value as another comparison for the growing body of work being done in Protestant-Catholic relations and anti-Catholicism in Britain and North America.

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<sup>7</sup> MacKinnon 28.

<sup>8</sup> Edward MacDonald, "Magnificent Obsession: Twenty-Five Years of History in *The Island Magazine*; A Brief Sermon," *Island Magazine* 50 (Fall/Winter 2001): 35-6.



## Overview

In researching the creation of the Protestant-Catholic divide on P.E.I. a key interpretive insight was gained while contemplating the quote of the Member of the House of Assembly (MHA) Robert Mooney which begins this section. Soon after the Belfast Riot of 1847 ended he observed that hitherto hidden sectarian feelings had suddenly risen to the surface and he hoped they would remain in this infancy stage. They did not.

The history of Protestant-Catholic relations on the Island can be sub-divided into four main eras: a time of borrowed peace (1763-1847); the sectarian wars (1847-77); the gentlemen's agreements (1877-1966); and the bridging of the divide (1966-present). The sectarian spirit on the Island came over in the heart of its settlers, but for the first eighty years of British rule it was rarely expressed. Serious sectarian wrangling was born with the bitter violence exhibited in the Belfast Riot, as Mooney's quote above suggests, and was particularly intense during the education wars of 1856-77. In order to dwell beside each other in relative peace the Island's leaders instituted many gentlemen's agreements, mostly unwritten, which led to a fairly even distribution of government patronage. These agreements were part of the milieu that Islanders lived in from 1877-1966, and remnants of them still remain. A second round of school issues from 1957-69 led to the dismantling of most of these agreements, and by the time the Catholic and Public / Protestant hospitals in Charlottetown were united in 1982 the sectarian spirit on the Island was pretty well dead. Each stage of these four historical periods will be dealt with in the three parts of this thesis, though only cursory attention will be paid to the bridging period.

Part I gives a brief overview of the attitudinal legacy the pioneers took to the Island from their mother countries, and summarizes the establishment of the Penal Laws and the process of emancipation in the United Kingdom, the U.S.A. and Canada. It also gives some context regarding the Island's ethnic and religious mix, and closes with a look at the

relatively positive relations between Catholics and Protestants on the Island in the pioneer years.

Part II deals with the Island's sectarian wars from 1847-77. Its main focus is the very serious riot that took place between Irish Catholics and Scottish Protestants in 1847 which ended these positive relations. It argues that the serious sectarian conflict on the Island was birthed in this event, not the Bible Question of 1856. It provides but a brief summary of the sectarian / education wars of 1856-77, because it is the only part of this story that has been well told elsewhere, by Ian Ross Robertson.<sup>9</sup> Judged by historic content alone this period should be granted the greatest number of pages in this thesis, but there is no reason to duplicate his excellent work.

Part III covers the period of gentlemen's agreements (1877-1966). It examines how the divide manifested itself in the schools, medical field, social services, political life, businesses, fraternal and volunteer organizations, and the sports fields. It also looks at interactions between members of each group at a personal and a religious level, before concluding with an exploration of the geography of the divide, and the varying levels of tension exhibited in different communities. An Epilogue then takes a brief glance ahead to see how the sectarian divide on the Island was bridged.

The material demonstrates that while the divide on the Island originated in the mother countries, its expression through the years was due much more to local factors than specific events in the homeland, quite unlike what took place in Ontario, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. The same was true of Newfoundland, and in both cases it seems primarily due to these Island Provinces being the most isolated North American colonies in the

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<sup>9</sup> Ian Ross Robertson, "Religion, Politics, and Education in Prince Edward Island from 1856-1877" (MA Thesis, McGill University, Montreal, 1968). Also summarized in "The Bible Question in Prince Edward Island from 1856 to 1860" *Acadiensis* 5 (Spring 1976): 3-25; "Party Politics and Religious Controversialism in Prince Edward Island from 1860 to 1863," *Acadiensis* 7 (Spring 1978): 29-59; "Political Realignment in Pre-Confederation Prince Edward Island 1863-1870," *Acadiensis* 15 (Autumn 1985): 35-58.

Empire. The influence of the mother country was most evident up until 1830, particularly in the minimal nature of the Penal Laws and their lax enforcement, especially compared to Newfoundland and Nova Scotia which were settled a little earlier than the Island. It is also evident in the ending of the restrictions on Catholics related to voting and the holding of public office a year after they were ended in England, but closer examination brings out local factors at work here as well. What makes P.E.I. unique is that it resisted the leavening influence of the rest of North America after 1774 by refusing to grant Catholics the vote. This does not seem, however, to be due to loyalty to the Crown but to the fear of the Protestant ascendancy on the Island if it gave the vote to such a large, threatening minority (45%).

The comparative analysis between P.E.I., Britain, the Atlantic Provinces, Ontario and the United States will show that in general what was happening in one place was also happening in the other; that the relations between Protestants and Catholics went through similar phases in all these areas, give or take a few years. The main regions which do not fall neatly into these developmental phases are Ireland, Wales, Quebec, the Southern USA (excluding Maryland) in the 1800s, and the western settlements in Canada and the United States. I will, therefore, mostly ignore these areas in doing my comparative work and focus my attention on the other Atlantic Provinces, while also taking some notice of England, Scotland, the north-eastern United States and Ontario in the 1800s.

The history will demonstrate John Eldon Green's dictum that "the separate school system was the anchor barrier to any full sense of community"<sup>10</sup> on the Island. Probably nowhere else were education issues so intensely, and over such a long period, at the heart and center of the divide, and not until the gentlemen's agreements that grew up around schooling were discarded did Protestants and Catholics on the Island start to mingle freely.

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<sup>10</sup> John Eldon Green, A Mind of One's Own. Memoirs of an Albany Boy (Charlottetown: Tangle Lane, 2007), 146-7.

While other factors definitely played a role in bridging the divide, sectarian division on P.E.I. would most likely have followed the pattern of Newfoundland and Scotland and endured for a longer time, if the *de facto* separate school system had not been brought to an abrupt end.

### Phases in Protestant-Catholic Relations in Britain and Her North American Colonies

In setting the context for Protestant-Catholic relations on Prince Edward Island a brief overview of the relations in Britain and English-speaking North America will be helpful. These are best sub-divided into five main historical periods. Though not every area went through each period in the same way or at the precise same time, and there is some arbitrariness in the precise dates chosen, still this should provide a useful guideline to the flow of history and facilitate comparative analysis. Ireland<sup>11</sup> and Quebec are not included in this chart because, having a large majority of Catholics, their history evolved in a significantly different way than the rest of the British Empire. Wales is excluded for the opposite reason, for it did not see a significant influx of Catholics until the early part of the twentieth century. Ontario is excluded because its connection with French Canada made it *sui generis*, resulting in it being Britain's only English-speaking North American colony which had no penal laws. Still it did experience a period of borrowed peace before its sectarian wars of 1850-75, and so some comparison to it will be made later on in the text. Western Canada is excluded because its real growth took place mostly after the sectarian wars and Irish famine immigration had come to an end. By the U.S.A. I am primarily

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<sup>11</sup> While Northern Ireland is similar to P.E.I. in its proportion of Protestants and Catholics it was not a political unit until 1921. It is therefore comparable to P.E.I. for only the last fifty years of the period this thesis covers. Ulster conceivably could be regarded as a cultural unit prior to that, but does one then base the comparison on its nine counties, the six that remained part of the United Kingdom in 1921, or the four traditional Scottish Protestant counties? In light of this lack of precision on the comparative unit and the anachronism involved in picturing the new country as simply a continuation of the six counties (not to mention Ulster's other unique features), it has been excluded in this comparative analysis.

referring to the northeastern region, roughly equivalent to the original Colonies from Virginia to Maine.

**1559-1782 > Penal Law Period** - The Penal Laws were directed against both Catholic and Dissenting groups, but except for the time of Charles II and James II (1660-89) they had a far greater negative impact on the former group. This period began with the initial establishment of the Penal Statutes under Elizabeth and continued until they first began to be overturned in England and Ireland in 1778. It also includes the very strong negative backlash against this Bill that was witnessed in Scotland and then London (the Gordon Riots in 1780) and ends with the proclamation of a second relief bill in Ireland in 1782, which year also marks the nadir for the Catholic Church in Britain.

**1782-1832 > A Time of Borrowed Peace** - The Penal Laws did not, of course, come to an end until 1829-30<sup>12</sup> when Catholics received the right to vote and hold public office. The period between the first overturning of some Catholic disabilities and the completion of this process, however, witnessed a time of fairly good relations between Protestants and Catholics, and so I have set it off as a distinct period. It has been dubbed a period of “borrowed peace” because even though there was not a lot of visible sectarian bickering, tensions were usually simmering just below the surface.

**1832-1877 > Sectarian Wars** - With the ending of government sponsored oppression of Catholics a period of intense “popular anti-Catholicism” began. These sectarian wars ranged from verbal mudslinging to massive riots, and were not only religious in nature but also political, socio-economic and ethnic. On the

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<sup>12</sup> Even after 1830 a few minor disabilities continued to plague Catholics in the United Kingdom, and to a lesser extent parts of Canada and the U.S.A., but for all intents and purposes the Penal Laws were a minor matter after 1829-30.

Catholic side it was most often the Irish who were at the centre of these wars and the main target of Protestant animosity but German Catholics also figured prominently on occasion, especially in the States. The event I have selected to mark the beginning of this period is the advent of the political / sectarian strife in Newfoundland, and the event to mark its ending is the termination of the same on P.E.I. By this date one also witnesses the end of intense anti-Catholicism in England (excluding Liverpool) and the last significant episodes of sectarian violence in Ontario and New Brunswick.

1877-1966 > **Gentlemen's Agreements / Sectarianism's Half-Life** - This period really should have two names. In much of Canada sectarian relations were defined by "gentlemen's agreements." These were intended to keep the peace between the two groups through a somewhat proportional division of patronage appointments and agreements surrounding education issues. Outside Canada, however, it may be better to refer to the period as "Sectarianism's Half-Life," though the half life was more vigorous in some of these areas than in others, particularly the U.S.A., Liverpool and the central belt of Scotland, all of which had a more virulent form of popular anti-Catholicism than Canada and the rest of Britain, and all of which witnessed some episodes of violence. The dates I have chosen are based on P.E.I., partly because it is perhaps the best model we have for these gentlemen's agreements, and partly because its end date corresponds well with the end of most of the religiously driven popular anti-Catholicism in the States (as marked by Kennedy's election), Vatican II and the beginning of extensive dialogues between Catholics and Protestants, and the secularization of western society's values which came to the fore in the mid-sixties.

1966-now > **Bridging of the Divide** - The bridging period relates to the breakdown of the gentlemen's agreements in Canada and the end of significant religiously driven anti-Catholicism in the States. Britain does not slot quite so neatly into this period. Serious sectarian concerns in most areas of Britain ceased to matter much after the end after World War II, due in part to Protestants and Catholics fighting side by side during the war, and to pluralistic and secular values becoming dominant in the culture. While the 'foxhole fellowship' of World War I also contributed to a decrease in sectarian animosity between the wars, still significant residual anti-Catholic sentiment remained during that period. This was evidenced in the campaign by the Church of Scotland in the 1920s to limit Irish Catholic immigration, the Prayer Book controversy of 1927-8, and the sectarian violence in Edinburgh in the mid 1930s. It is also worthy of note that in most places in Britain where there were significant numbers of Irish Catholics (Lancashire, Glasgow and some rural areas in Wales) the bridging period did not begin until the 1960s, so it is possible to argue that the good relations in the other areas (particularly the rural portions) were more a result of there being no group to target than any real breakdown of sectarian prejudice. It should also be mentioned that sectarian violence and animosities in Glasgow are not at an end yet, mainly due to the close connection many of its residents have with Northern Ireland and the sectarian hostilities associated with the Old Firm rivalry between the Celtic and Rangers football clubs.

The following chart is broken down into these five main periods but also sub-divided in such a way that some of the local distinctive features are enabled to come out.

PROTESTANT-CATHOLIC RELATIONS IN BRITAIN, CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES					
	Penal Laws (1559-1782)	Borrowed Peace (1782-1832)	Sectarian Wars (1832-1877)	Gentlemen's Agreements (1877-1966)	Bridging of the Divide (1966-Present)
England	1559-1782	1782-mid 1830s	mid 1830s-1875	1875-1945	1945-Present
Scotland <sup>13</sup>	1559-1793	1793-1835	1835-1872	1872-1945	1945-Present
U.S.A. <sup>14</sup>	1607-1776	1776-1834	1834-1857	1857-1960	1960-Present
Newfoundland	1610-1784	1784-1832	1832-1885	1865-1997	1997-Present
Nova Scotia	1749-1783	1783-1856	1856-1863	1863-1954	1954-Present
P.E.I.	1769-1786	1786-1847	1847-1877	1877-1966	1966-Present
New Brunswick <sup>15</sup>	----	1784-1841	1841-1875	1875-1967	1967-Present

<sup>13</sup> Scotland probably fits worst into the schema laid out here. While its Catholics lived under the Penal Laws their relative remoteness from central authorities meant these prohibitions did not impact their lives to the degree they did in England, Ireland or the Thirteen Colonies. For the most part they had a time of borrowed peace even during the Penal Law period, but during the Borrowed Peace period there was a lot of popular anti-Catholicism and even a few examples of violence. Meanwhile the Sectarian War period itself saw less overt violence than elsewhere and had no significant manifestation in the political arena, while the “Half Life” period saw more violence and some political division (particularly in the 1930s) along religious lines. Finally, while the bridging started after the second World War in most of Scotland, still in certain pockets the divide has continued down to the present day. This is particularly true of Glasgow (where there are still violent manifestations) but is also evident to a small degree in other places.

<sup>14</sup> The U.S.A. should be sub-divided like Canada but that would have made the chart too cumbersome. The format as presently structured, for example, misses out on the fact that Catholics in Maryland (1634-54), Rhode Island and Pennsylvania suffered under but few disabilities in the Penal Period, while Catholics in most of the South for much of the nineteenth century experienced a period of borrowed peace. The southern States, with its very small population of Catholics, may in fact be paralleled best with Wales.

<sup>15</sup> New Brunswick was not created as a colony until after the Penal Laws had started to be overturned and so the only disabilities Catholics had were in regard to the Franchise, the right to hold public office and the right to perform marriages (the latter which impinged even more heavily on the Dissenting groups). Their Sectarian War period is probably best sub-divided into the Orange-Green riots (1841-9) and the battle over separate schools (1871-5), but the intervening years were not so much a time of borrowed peace as they were a time of overwhelming Protestant domination in the colony.



## Methodology and Source Criticism

The method followed in this work is a mix of chronological description and topical discussions. The period from the founding of the British colony in 1763 until 1877, while structured topically, still follows a fairly sequential manner, its distinctive feature being the amount of space devoted to the pivotal event in the development of the divide on the Island, the Belfast Riot. A unique approach, however, is adopted for the 1877-1966 period, for there the chronology is viewed quite flatly. This is not to imply that there was no change over time, but simply that the relative stability means one can more effectively present the material in a topical fashion than a chronological one. One weakness in this approach is that it can inadvertently cause one to ignore some of the subtle changes in the intensity and nature of the sectarian feelings Islanders displayed during this ninety-year period, another is that it might lead one to think that a particular practice was in place throughout the whole era. I have been able to mitigate somewhat these potential problems by occasionally making brief comments on the subtle changes; by indicating, wherever possible, the time frame in which a particular practice was put into effect and / or ended; and by providing the approximate time when an oral report was recorded.

The information in Parts I and II is based on the traditional primary sources generally used by historians - newspaper accounts, official political and legislative documents, legal records, censuses, travelogues, memoirs, private letters and diaries. The extant material on the Island for all of these, except for the last three items and newspapers prior to the 1820s, is both reasonably plentiful and quite accessible. Some oral history of this early period is also accessible in early Island histories, early magazine articles, community histories and in the memories of older Islanders. This has been especially helpful in understanding the Belfast Riot, the oral traditions concerning it ranging from songs and written oral accounts contemporaneous with the event, to one or two little stories that have

come down in many of the families which had an ancestor in the riot. These oral accounts are of value not only for what they tell us of the event but also for what they reveal about how the memory was retained. In the case of the two great violent sectarian episodes in Island history, the Acadian expulsion and the Belfast Riot, we shall see that on the one hand much was covered over and ‘forgotten,’ but on the other it was also retained and used as a cautionary tale to make sure that one was careful not to put too much trust in someone of ‘the other kind.’

Secondary sources were also, of course, consulted. Some of the older Island histories and older magazine articles proved to be quite valuable because, being written near to the time when some of the events took place, they to some degree serve almost as primary sources. Even so, they generally have two main weaknesses. The first is that they sometimes exhibit their own sectarian bias, so one has to be careful to compare their accounts against the primary sources. Their biases, however, can also be instructive, because they give us some insight into the attitudes prevalent among educated Islanders during the period their piece was written. The second is that there was often a marked disinclination among many writers to honestly and openly address occurrences of religious hostility. One cannot therefore assume that just because little was said on a particular matter that little actually happened, which again forces the researcher to a more thorough examination of the primary documents.

The more recent academic works on Island history have also been consulted and generally found quite useful, both for their analysis and their help in uncovering primary sources. Still one has to critically examine their claims against the primary accounts as well, and not just assume their accounts are accurate and conclusions all sound. There was much I had to ‘unlearn’ in doing this thesis, particularly in regard to how the Belfast Riot was understood. In terms of the comparative analysis with the United Kingdom, British North

America, and the USA, most of my understanding of what took place in these places was based on a wide reading in the secondary sources.

The material in Part III is primarily based on oral history.<sup>16</sup> Though it draws on the more traditional primary and secondary sources the big picture was mainly derived from the oral evidence, and the more traditional sources were used to round out, corroborate and solidify the oral accounts. There is nothing in the comparative literature on Protestant-Catholic relations that is like this, nothing that is so grounded in the stories of the common people. Given the unique nature of this approach some comment needs to be made on its strengths and challenges.

The first challenge I had to face related to the reality that I am not an outside 'objective' researcher. Part of this history, as with any Islander my age, I lived. I am therefore, in ethnographic terms, writing from the vantage point of an "insider,"<sup>17</sup> and while trying to be rigorously academic in all I write, the reality always remains that this is a portrayal of 'my people' and 'my province.' Being an insider, of course, has both its advantages and disadvantages. On the plus side I often had a personal knowledge, though decidedly incomplete, of certain parts of the story I was recounting, along with the insider's feel of what life is like on the Island. I also had 'ins' with the community that greatly eased access to obtaining both written and oral information. Yet I also began with built-in biases on the interpretation of some of the events based on my own religious stance and personal upbringing. It hardly needs saying that not all Islanders see things the same way, and as an Islander I too had 'taken up a side' on certain of the key issues. Throughout my research I have kept my biases in mind and made a concerted effort to read as widely as possible and to talk to as many Islanders as possible, "persistently asking" myself whose viewpoint "am I

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<sup>16</sup> For an introduction to the specific oral sources used for this period see pp 199-202.

<sup>17</sup> Harry F. Wolcott, *Ethnography, A Way of Seeing* (Walnut Creek, California: AltaMira Press, 1999), 157.

missing?";<sup>18</sup> so that my biases would be constantly challenged and my conclusions based on a solid bed of evidence not just my pre-disposed inclination.

I was raised in a religious tradition and a home that probably prepared me as well for this task as any upbringing on the Island could. I am part of the sixth largest denomination on the Island, the Christian Churches / Churches of Christ. This group, while not insignificant and never oppressed, was also rarely at the heart of power. Theologically we were anti-Catholic, but without a history of personal or communal anti-Catholic activity, having originated in 1809 in the USA. The founder of our movement was Alexander Campbell, who debated with Bishop John Purcell of Cincinnati in 1837, in what was probably the greatest of the Protestant-Catholic debates of the era.<sup>19</sup> Their rigorous debating of theology combined with their personal high regard for each other was also lived out in my immediate family. My father was raised in a large family who were well-grounded in Campbellian theology, in religiously mixed Montague. They had many theological debates with the large Catholic family next door, but they were also close, life-long friends. As noted above<sup>20</sup> he also played a lead role in the effort to break down some of the institutional divides on the Island, and partly as a result of this came to be very highly regarded in the Catholic community, while at the same time losing some friends in the Protestant community. This background helped me on the one hand to be quite aware of the major theological differences which undergirded the Protestant-Catholic divide, but on the other hand it left me with almost no personal sense of distrust or wariness that people of other Protestant sects often felt towards Catholics. Partly due to this background Catholics had very little reticence in sharing their stories with me. In fact the only group from whom I

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<sup>18</sup> Joy Parr, "'Don't Speak For Me': Practicing Oral History amidst the Legacies of Conflict," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 21 (2010): 3.

<sup>19</sup> Alexander Campbell and John B. Purcell, *A Debate on the Roman Catholic Religion* (Nashville: McQuiddy Printing Company, 1914).

<sup>20</sup> See p 2.

felt any real sense of distrust was among some of the older Protestants who had connections with Prince of Wales College, and remembered my father's key role in the dis-mantling of that institution.

This segues nicely into the second matter I should address, how I conducted my interviews. Wolcott lists ten types of interview styles; mine tended to fall into the semi-structured or casual conversation categories.<sup>21</sup> A good number of the former were planned, formal, sit-down, recorded interviews, with a clearly defined agenda; but they were also open-ended to allow the interviewee freedom to focus on areas they deemed important. They were also of necessity friendly, because that is simply a basic requirement for effective communication on our small Island. Bailey speaks of the interviewing process as being informal and reciprocal, a dialogue, like a real conversation between equals;<sup>22</sup> Wolcott speaks of "creative listening," which he says means not only listening but being interactive, and which he in turn argues helps to make the other person a more effective talker;<sup>23</sup> Parr believes that "the oral historian must be an engaged interlocutor."<sup>24</sup>

These statements summarize well how I approached my interviews. They were directed and focussed but also lively and open, so that both parties were actively engaged in the process. As such the interviews very much had a sense of "shared authority."<sup>25</sup> It was not uncommon for one of my interviewees to say something like, "Well it was not quite like that in our area, we were great friends with the Protestants in our area." Most interviewees were quite confident that they knew more about their topic than I did, and they were right,

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<sup>21</sup> Harry F. Wolcott, The Art of Fieldwork (Walnut Creek, California: AltaMira Press, 1995), 106.

<sup>22</sup> Carol A. Bailey, A Guide to Field Research (Thousand Oaks, California: Pine Forge Press, 1996), 75.

<sup>23</sup> Wolcott, Fieldwork, 111.

<sup>24</sup> Parr 6.

<sup>25</sup> Graham Smith, "The Making of Oral History," [http://www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/resources/articles/oral\\_history.html](http://www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/resources/articles/oral_history.html).

they were the intellectual authorities in their areas. But as I would probe deeper, for example, asking “did you go to dances together or date each other?”, they often came to reflect on their own reality in a new way. Then towards the end of the interview I might share something like, “You know, that fits in really well with what I have been learning, in places where the schools were mixed the people were good friends;” and they would then realize why their experience had been different from that of many other Islanders. Through this type of dialogue a common respect and appreciation of each other and their fields of expertise grew. Portelli says oral history “enhances the authority and self-awareness of the narrator, and may raise questions about aspects of experience that the speaker has never spoken or even seriously thought about,”<sup>26</sup> and that it “encourages an effort at self-awareness, growth, and change for all those involved.”<sup>27</sup> Both this sense of enhanced authority and self-awareness were apparent in most of the Islanders I interviewed, and I believe both parties in the interviews grew in their understanding of the sociological factors that helped shape us as Islanders.

The majority of my interviews, however, were of the second type; they were casual in nature and most often ‘just happened.’ The Protestant - Catholic divide on P.E.I. is a compelling topic for Islanders, at least for those of us over fifty. Invariably when I would mention my research topic to an Islander in this age group they did not respond by asking any clarifying questions, they just started telling me stories of what it was like when they grew up. Often I would ask them if I could take some time to interview them and write down their comments, other times the conversations would be brief and I would immediately go away and write down what they had said (these are distinguished in the footnotes respectively as interviews or conversations). While these more informal

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<sup>26</sup> Alessandro Portelli, The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 4, as cited by Parr 11.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid 52, as cited by Parr 11.

interviews and conversations did not have all of the quality control that one would prefer in doing oral history, this lack was more than made up for by other factors. First, this approach meant that the informant's report was spontaneous, it was what immediately came to their minds and allowed little opportunity for them to consciously filter their remarks. Second, it enabled me to get a great breadth of input, as I literally had hundreds of these short conversations. So while full academic rigour was not a part of all of my interviews and conversations this was counter-balanced by the bigger and more nuanced picture I was able to paint due to the volume of them. When a couple of dozen people all tell you the same basic story about walking past people of the other sect on their way to school you know the fact is true; but you also get insight into the small variations, for some experienced no conflict with the other group, others only name calling, and a few of the boys the occasional fist-fight.

The quality of the oral history I collected was also solidified by the fact that I had an even larger bed of oral history, most of it gathered by others, with which to compare it. This included interviews done by hundreds of students over a period of thirty-five years, nearly fifty emails and written accounts sent or given to me by Islanders (most of whom I did not previously know), and a good number of anecdotes contained in various Island books, articles and private correspondence. Again, the student interviews were not done with full academic rigour, nor did they come out of a scientific sample, but the sheer volume and variety of the accounts more than counter-balanced these drawbacks.

Certain issues arose with the use of the student interviews particularly. Many of these were carried out by a grand-child or a family friend of the informant. No doubt there was some reticence<sup>28</sup> on the part of some of these interviewees to share dark family or community secrets, but what one really noticed when reading the hundreds of these reports

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<sup>28</sup> See pp 271-272 for a specific example of some reticence noticed by one interviewer.

was not the reticence but how forthcoming the older people were about these matters. This was also my experience in discussing “our” sectarian past with Island seniors. It was as if they were relieved to be finally free to talk about these matters, more than they were concerned to keep them hushed up. On many occasions I understood the reality of oral history as “a crucial therapeutic tool,”<sup>29</sup> as so many of our ‘older folk’ felt they were finally permitted the freedom to discuss openly what for them had often been a forbidden topic. This was in stark contrast to the reaction I got from most Newfoundlanders, who I found to be still quite reluctant to discuss these issues. I suspect this was due to the fact that their bridging period occurred about three decades after P.E.I.’s, and so the memories of the divide were still quite fresh in their minds.

Another issue I had to confront was how to deal with multiple reports about a specific place or incident that had somewhat conflicting details. In some cases these just seemed to be reflecting different personal experiences (a daughter of a Lebanese businessman, raised in a high church Anglican congregation, certainly did not have the built-in anti-Catholic prejudices that her Scottish, Presbyterian neighbour had); in other cases it appeared that the reporters were perhaps covering up the sectarian differences or alternatively even exaggerating them. Still, the reports showed for the most part remarkable consistency and where there were differences it was usually relatively easy to discern the cause of these. A small number of the reports (about 1%) also seemed to partake more of the nature of urban legends, folk stories, or jokes, rather than eyewitness accounts. On the rare occasion I have used one of these I have flagged it with a phrase something like “a humorous story is told.” While it was, of course, impossible to personally verify the truth of most of the oral accounts, those I have included appear to have been passed on by reliable witnesses who were relating stories about their own lives or people they knew well.

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<sup>29</sup> Parr 7.



All of this being said, it is important to note that this work is neither an ethnographic study nor an oral history, but simply a history that makes extensive use of oral sources. As such it is, to some degree, a “history from below,” a history that tells the story not only of ‘great men’ and great events but also the story of the common people. Smith says that “since the 1970s oral history in Britain has grown from being a method in folklore studies to become a key component in community histories.”<sup>30</sup> This is well-illustrated in the difference between the work I have done on Protestant-Catholic relations on the Island and the work conducted by Island historian David Weale.<sup>31</sup> The stories he collected through his students, and the writings he has produced based upon them, are definitely in the “folklore studies” category. What I have done is taken the stories he collected, along with many others, and used them as a key component in this “community history.” This work is not an oral history per se but a history that relies heavily on oral testimony, and reflects the move of some oral historians to combine “oral testimonies with other historical sources,” and thereby be better able to test “memories for reliability and validity.”<sup>32</sup> The conclusions reached in Part III are grounded in a large mass of oral history, collected by hundreds of interviewers from many hundreds of Island seniors, over a period of thirty-five years. The sample group, while not scientific, was relatively random, and represents a broad cross-section of the Island’s population, whether viewed geographically, religiously, ethnically, by class level, or by age. All of this was compared against the more common sources used by the historian and in the end paints a compelling picture of how sectarian conflict was lived out in the lives of the average Islander.

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<sup>30</sup> Smith.

<sup>31</sup> See p 200, n 15.

<sup>32</sup> Smith.

## Literature Review

The most general overview of the historic Protestant-Catholic divide in the United Kingdom and English-speaking North America, is John Wolffe's "Contentious Christians: Protestant--Catholic Conflict Since the Reformation" (2004).<sup>33</sup> It focuses mainly on the United Kingdom and the U.S.A. but also touches on other parts of the British Empire and Europe (particularly Germany). Marjule Anne Drury "Anti-Catholicism in Germany, Britain and the United States: A Review and Critique of Recent Scholarship" is not a history but a comparative analysis which examines "recent historical literature on modern British and American anti-Catholicism, in order to trace the similarities and distinctiveness of the turn-of-the-century German case."<sup>34</sup> The former is the best place to begin one's study on Protestant-Catholic relations. It lays out first the theological basis of the divide but then shows how political and cultural forces helped shape the sectarian tensions, without falling into the temptation of seeing religion being used merely "as a cloak for other forces."<sup>35</sup> Wolffe then explores the popular anti-Catholicism of the mid-1800s and closes by drawing out the trend (with some notable exceptions) away from conflict and towards a sometimes fragile co-existence in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His phases, while not drawn as precisely as mine, follow the same general pattern, but omit any mention of the importance of elite accommodation in Canada in achieving peaceful co-existence, or of the shift from that fragile state to a true bridging evident after 1960.

The greatest amount of work in this field has naturally been done in relation to Ireland. It is certainly outside the scope of this thesis to investigate this vast literature but I

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<sup>33</sup> John Wolffe, "Contentious Christians: Protestant--Catholic Conflict Since the Reformation," in Religion in History. Conflict, Conversion and Co-Existence, ed John Wolffe (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 97-128.

<sup>34</sup> Marjule Anne Drury, "Anti-Catholicism in Germany, Britain and the United States: A Review and Critique of Recent Scholarship," Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture (March 1, 2001): 98.

<sup>35</sup> Wolffe 98.

will note a few key works. John Brewer and Gareth Higgins provide a very useful overview. Desmond Bowen's work focuses on a smaller period of popular anti-Catholicism from 1822-1870, often called the "Second Reformation" but dubbed by Bowen as "The Protestant Crusade." It was a mostly unsuccessful move among the evangelical wing of the Church of Ireland to proselytize Catholics in Ireland, and ultimately widened the sectarian divide there. There are few useful parallels to be drawn between Ireland and P.E.I., the most fruitful ones being between the efforts of Prime Minister Terence O'Neill in the 1960s and the social changes taking place at the same time on Prince Edward Island, but that is also outside the scope of this thesis.<sup>36</sup>

Wales also proves to be less valuable for comparative purposes with the rest of Britain and its North American colonies for the precise opposite reason, its paucity of Catholics. Some recent discussion on it has occurred in The Journal of Ecclesiastical History (2002-5), initiated with an article by Trystan Owain Hughes, which was then critiqued by Paul O'Leary, and concluded with a rejoinder by Hughes.<sup>37</sup> The greatest contribution Wales brings to a comparative analysis is that it does illustrate that the fear of Catholicism could be very intense in certain areas that had almost no Catholic presence. As such it provides a useful parallel to parts of England, western Scotland before the Irish began immigrating there in the late-1700s, and perhaps most usefully with the southern states in the 1900s. The fear of Catholics in these places was not due to any nearby danger (which fear, for example, beset upstate New Yorkers on the Quebec border before 1760),

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<sup>36</sup> John D. Brewer and Gareth I. Higgins, Anti-Catholicism in Northern Ireland, 1600-1998. The Mote and the Beam (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998); Desmond Bowen, Protestant Crusade in Ireland 1800-1870 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978); Terence O'Neill, The Autobiography of Terence O'Neill (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1972).

<sup>37</sup> Trystan Owain Hughes, "Anti-Catholicism in Wales, 1900-1960," The Journal of Ecclesiastical History 53 (April 2002): 312-325; Paul O'Leary, "When Was Anti-Catholicism? The Case of Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Wales," The Journal of Ecclesiastical History 56 (April 2005): 308-325; Trystan Owain Hughes, "When Was Anti-Catholicism? A Response," The Journal of Ecclesiastical History 56 (April 2005): 326-333.

but it was the fear of the unknown; the Pope and his henchmen were almost like bogeyman. Popular anti-Catholicism in Wales, according to Hughes, peaked in the first six decades of the twentieth-century when more Catholics started to arrive, and was driven to a large degree by the Nonconformist preachers. He points out that while popular anti-Catholicism in Wales was “out of phase” chronologically with that which occurred in Victorian England, many of the reasons for anti-Catholicism in nineteenth-century England bore “an uncanny resemblance to those current in Wales a century later.”<sup>38</sup> Many of the same factors in the bridging of the divide in Wales in the 1960s were also at work in other parts of Britain, Canada and the USA.<sup>39</sup>

A significant amount of work has been done on anti-Catholicism in England. Colin Haydon’s Anti-Catholicism in Eighteenth-Century England<sup>40</sup> demonstrates that while anti-Catholicism decreased in the 1700s among society’s elite and the penal laws were for the most part ignored, at the level of popular fear among the masses it was still very real and did not start to fade among them until after the Gordon Riots of 1780. Christopher Hibbert’s work gives a detailed, scholarly study of the fascinating story of Lord Gordon and ‘his’ riots.<sup>41</sup>

Most of the scholarly work on popular anti-Catholicism in England has been focussed on the nineteenth century. E. R. Norman’s work, Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England,<sup>42</sup> is brief and its main value lies in its collection of original documents. John Wolffe’s The Protestant Crusade in Great Britain, 1829-1860 and D. G. Paz’s Popular Anti-

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<sup>38</sup> Hughes, “Wales,” 313.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid 324.

<sup>40</sup> Colin Haydon, Anti-Catholicism in Eighteenth-Century England, c 1714-80. A Political and Social Study (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

<sup>41</sup> Christopher Hibbert, King Mob. The Story of Lord George Gordon and the Riots of 1780 (London: Longman’s, Green and Co, 1958).

<sup>42</sup> E. R. Norman, Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England (London: Allen & Unwin, 1968).

Catholicism in Mid-Victorian England<sup>43</sup> are the most detailed and strongest works in the field. The former gives a more general, albeit quite detailed, history. The latter shines the spotlight more on how anti-Catholicism and anti-Tractarianism worked at the ground level, describing in detail, for example, anti-Catholic lectures and Bonfire Night celebrations. It also analyses the similarity and differences in anti-Catholic agitation in various areas. In certain ways it is similar to my work in its focus being on how anti-Catholicism was 'lived' by the average citizen and in seeking to show how it played out differently depending on the particular community. Perhaps its greatest value is in its detailed analysis of anti-Catholic memorials and petitions, novels and primary sources.

Hugh Macleod's essay about the influence of Protestantism on British national identity from 1815-1945 traces three main stages in its development. He believes the key factor in forming British national identity before 1815 was the fear of Catholic France. Following Napoleon's defeat it became the fear of Irish and ultramontane Catholicism, which in turn fostered an intense period of popular anti-Catholicism. After 1860 he sees the role of Protestantism and anti-Catholicism in forming the nation's self-perception as still being significant but starting to decline, with World War I lessening it even further. By the end of World War II he sees Britons viewing themselves primarily as a secular nation. In tracing this he provides a useful overview of anti-Catholic feelings in the first half of the twentieth-century in England and Scotland.<sup>44</sup> Frank Neal's work covers a similar period but focuses only on Liverpool, the English city which has exhibited the greatest sectarian

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<sup>43</sup> John Wolfe, The Protestant Crusade in Great Britain, 1829-1860 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); D. G. Paz, Popular Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Victorian England (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992). See also Wolfe's "Change and Continuity in British Anti-Catholicism, 1829-1982," in Catholicism in Britain and France Since 1789, ed Frank Tallett and Nicholas Atkin (London: The Hambledon Press, 1996).

<sup>44</sup> Hugh Macleod, "Protestantism and British National Identity, 1815-1945," in Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia, eds Peter Van Der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann, 44-70 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

animosities in that country over the past two centuries.<sup>45</sup> John Maiden's work on the Prayer Book Controversy, which controversy was driven to a large degree by Protestant fears that the established church was drifting towards Rome, demonstrates that anti-Catholic sentiment and passions were still not dead during the inter-war years.<sup>46</sup>

Histories of the Catholic Church also include much on their relations with Protestants simply because the Protestant context for English Catholics was overwhelming. The most important of these are Bossy and Leys, which cover from the time of Elizabeth to the mid-1800s. Brian Magee's work traces the radical demographic shift in England where, under a persecuting and oppressive Protestant government, the country went from having a significant Catholic majority at the death of Mary to being only about 1% Catholic by 1780. P.E.I., therefore, was settled when the Catholic Church in Britain was at its most subdued, and this is reflected in the low key and inoffensive approach of its pioneer priests in carrying out their ministries.<sup>47</sup>

The two main historians who have researched anti-Catholicism in Scotland are James Handley and Steve Bruce.<sup>48</sup> The former sees a lot more anti-Catholicism at work in Scotland's history than the latter. Bruce's No Pope of Rome begins with an introductory chapter on nineteenth-century anti-Catholicism but it is mostly devoted to the twentieth century. Whereas most works on anti-Catholicism in England focus on the first seven decades of the 1800s most in Scotland focus on the twentieth century. As we will see

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<sup>45</sup> Frank Neal, Sectarian Violence: The Liverpool Experience, 1819-1914: An Aspect of Anglo-Irish History (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988).

<sup>46</sup> John Maiden, National Religion and The Prayer Book Controversy, 1927-8 (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell, 2009).

<sup>47</sup> John Bossy, The English Catholic Community 1570-1850 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976); M.D.R. Leys, Catholics in England 1559-1829. A Social History (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961); Brian Magee, The English Recusants (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne Ltd, 1938).

<sup>48</sup> James E. Handley, The Irish in Scotland (Glasgow: Burns, 1964 – originally published in 2 vols in 1945 and 1947); Steve Bruce, No Pope of Rome: Militant Protestantism in Modern Scotland (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1985).

Maritime authors focus mostly on the mid-nineteenth century while the interest of American authors is fairly evenly spread over the whole period of its nationhood. The common factor in all of this seems to be the era which has the most interesting sectarian related episodes.

In 2004 Bruce co-authored another book, Sectarianism in Scotland, which was a response to Thomas Devine's Scotland's Shame? Bigotry and Sectarianism in Modern Scotland.<sup>49</sup>

The latter argued for a significant amount of anti-Catholicism in modern Scotland, but the former more effectively argued that Devine and his cohort of authors had overstated their case. Tom Gallagher meanwhile provides a useful overview of the one place in Scotland, Glasgow, that most definitely still does exhibit significant sectarian tensions, and looks in detail at the sudden eruption of anti-Catholic fervour instigated by John Cormack in the mid-1930s in Edinburgh.<sup>50</sup> Stewart Brown's essay traces how the Church of Scotland went from viewing the Catholic Church as a menace in the 1920s to respecting and co-operating with it following Vatican II.<sup>51</sup>

The classic historical work on Protestant-Catholic relations in the U.S.A. is Ray Allen Billington's, The Protestant Crusade 1800-1860. A Study of the Origins of American Nativism (1938).<sup>52</sup> It covers the period from the founding of the American Colonies till the Civil War, though the first two centuries are just a background summation. Very few books in this field cover such a long period while still giving sufficient depth to the topic. It demonstrates that the general patterns evident in England, Scotland and the Canadian

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<sup>49</sup> Steve Bruce, et al, Sectarianism in Scotland (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004); T. Devine, ed. Scotland's Shame? Bigotry and Sectarianism in Modern Scotland (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 2000). See also G Walker and T Gallagher, eds, Sermons and Battle Hymns: Protestant Popular Culture in Modern Scotland (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990).

<sup>50</sup> Tom Gallagher, Glasgow. The Uneasy Peace (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987); Edinburgh Divided. John Cormack and No Popery in the 1930s (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1987).

<sup>51</sup> Stewart J. Brown, "Presbyterians and Catholics in Twentieth-Century Scotland," in Scottish Christianity in the Modern World, eds Stewart J. Brown and George Newlands, 255-82, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000.

<sup>52</sup> Ray Allen Billington, The Protestant Crusade 1800-1860. A Study of the Origins of American Nativism (New York: MacMillan, 1938).

colonies in regard to Protestant-Catholic relations were also evident in the States, though its two great events, the War of Independence and the Civil War, had a profound impact on the expression of anti-Catholicism there.

It had been preceded in 1936 by Sister Mary Augustina's American Opinion of Roman Catholicism in the Eighteenth Century,<sup>53</sup> a very thorough and scholarly account of anti-Catholic rhetoric and actions in the 1700s, though it does exhibit some Catholic bias. This bias is not uncommon in scholarly works written before Vatican II, such as Magee above and John Kane,<sup>54</sup> and even Billington to a small extent. It is as if the authors were still fighting the wars to some degree. More recent scholarship is not necessarily better in its research or recounting of the story, but it does tend to be more balanced and free of any sectarian axe to grind. This bias and defensiveness is also apparent in the American Catholic scholars who are researching modern, secular driven anti-Catholicism,<sup>55</sup> again because they are still in the midst of the wars.

John Higham's Strangers in the Land. Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925<sup>56</sup> (1967) is perhaps the forerunner to this more balanced approach, though its concerns reach far beyond Protestant-Catholic relations. In one sense it is the follow-up to Augustina's and Billington's works, yet in another sense it is quite different. The first two deal specifically with anti-Catholicism while Higham's is more generally about nativism, of which anti-Catholicism is but one significant component. Higham in fact criticizes Billington for effectively reducing nativism to anti-Catholicism.<sup>57</sup> He sees three types of nativism in the

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<sup>53</sup> Mary Augustina, American Opinion of Roman Catholicism in the Eighteenth Century (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936).

<sup>54</sup> John J. Kane, Catholic-Protestant Conflicts in America (Chicago: Regnery, 1955).

<sup>55</sup> See p 30, n 62.

<sup>56</sup> John Higham, Strangers in the Land. Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925 (New York: Athneum, 1967).

<sup>57</sup> Higham 5.



States – anti-Catholic, anti-radical and racial (or Anglo-Saxon). The strength of his work for our purposes is that he situates anti-Catholicism within this wider cultural context but this is also its weakness, for only about 15% of the book actually addresses our topic. Still it is probably the most detailed study of anti-Catholicism for this period and provides excellent summaries of the episodic outbreaks of anti-Catholic feeling that took place around 1875 (education issues), 1887-97 (the American Protective Association), 1910-15 (the Menace) and 1920-25 (the KKK).

This triumvirate of works forms the basis for studying anti-Catholicism in the United States. To them should be added three others. Andrew Stern's, "Southern Harmony: Catholic-Protestant Relations in the Antebellum South,"<sup>58</sup> is an excellent article which demonstrates that Protestant-Catholic relations in the south before the Civil War were generally quite positive, just as they were on P.E.I. before 1847. In spite of the occasional incidents of animosity there was also much co-operation, and "Protestant generosity was more conspicuous than Protestant hostility."<sup>59</sup> The major factor in this, unfortunately, was that most Catholics were supportive of the slave-holding culture in which they lived. The title of Lerond Curry's, Protestant-Catholic Relations in America. World War I through Vatican II,<sup>60</sup> points to its more balanced approach; it is not simply focussed on anti-Catholicism but looks at the good and bad on both sides of the sectarian fence. He concluded that the main factor in bridging the divide was the beginning of honest, open and irenic dialogue between Protestants and Catholics on the theological issues, which began about 1955. Vatican II then became a major catalyst in ecumenical activities such that by 1967 anti-Catholic and anti-Protestant stridency was no longer part of the mainstream

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<sup>58</sup> Andrew Stern, "Southern Harmony: Catholic-Protestant Relations in the Antebellum South," Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation (Summer, 2007): 165-90.

<sup>59</sup> Stern 165.

<sup>60</sup> Lerond Curry's Protestant-Catholic Relations in America. World War I through Vatican II (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1972).

leadership in either group (as it was in the late-forties and early-fifties) but relegated to small minorities in both groups. The modern, more secularly driven anti-Catholicism, which can be dated from the publication of *Humanae Vitae* in 1968, is well covered by Phillip Jenkins, The New Anti-Catholicism: The Last Acceptable Prejudice.<sup>61</sup> He deemed anti-Catholicism to be “the most significant un confronted prejudice in Modern America,”<sup>62</sup> even if it is now rooted more in secular ideology than it is evangelical. With these six works one can get a fairly thorough history of Protestant-Catholic relations in the United States.<sup>63</sup>

There are similarities between the situation in the U.S.A. and P.E.I. in the borrowed peace and sectarian wars periods, the Philadelphia riots and the school debates particularly providing some useful parallels and contrasts, but the operation of the penal laws functioned entirely differently, the gentlemen’s agreements were non-existent in the States and secular anti-Catholicism has almost no visible manifestation on the Island.

In regard to Canada most of the scholarly works treat very specific periods when sectarianism was at its peak. Each of the Maritime provinces has produced one significant work on their sectarian wars. The first of these was Ian Ross Robertson’s massive and excellent Master’s thesis, “Religion, Politics, and Education in Prince Edward Island from 1856-1877,” also published in condensed form in three articles in the Acadiensis journal.<sup>64</sup> It thoroughly covers the most intense period of sectarian squabbling on P.E.I. The main area of disagreement I have with him is that I see the wars beginning with the riot in 1847

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<sup>61</sup> Philip Jenkins, The New Anti-Catholicism: The Last Acceptable Prejudice (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>62</sup> Jenkins 22. Of the many other works in this area I will only mention Mark S. Massa, Anti-Catholicism in America. The Last Acceptable Prejudice (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2003).

<sup>63</sup> More American bibliographic sources can be found in Jason Duncan, Citizens or Papists? the Politics of Anti-Catholicism in New York, 1685-1821 (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), pp 239-43; and Stephen Kenny, “A Prejudice that Rarely Utters Its Name: A Historiographical and Historical Reflection upon North American Anti-Catholicism,” American Review of Canadian Studies (Winter 2002).

<sup>64</sup> For bibliographic details see p 6, n 9.

not the Bible Question in 1856. Then A.J.B. Johnston wrote a Master's thesis and subsequent article about Nova Scotia's most heated sectarian period.<sup>65</sup> Finally, Scott W. See did a thorough and well researched study of the sectarian riots in New Brunswick in the 1840s.<sup>66</sup>

There are also other works that cover specific aspects of the topic. Nicholas Meagher in 1927 did a short book on The Religious Warfare in Nova Scotia. 1855-1860.<sup>67</sup> It is a Catholic apologetic with a strong pro-Catholic bias, but it does bring under one binding many long and useful quotations related to the same period covered by Johnston. Several chapters in T. W. Acheson's history of colonial Saint John provide excellent, scholarly summaries of Protestant-Catholic relations in the most significant city in New Brunswick.<sup>68</sup> Peter Toner and John Little did articles on "The New Brunswick Schools Question" which show how the gentlemen's agreements were put into place there two years before they were on P.E.I., and George F. Stanley did a valuable summary of "The Caraquet Riots of 1875," which grew out of this separate school controversy.<sup>69</sup> John Garner meanwhile did foundational work on "The Enfranchisement of Roman Catholics in

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<sup>65</sup> A.J.B. Johnston, "The 'Protestant Spirit' of Colonial Nova Scotia: An Inquiry Into Mid-Nineteenth Century Anti-Catholicism" (MA Thesis, Dalhousie University, 1977); A.J.B. Johnston, "Popery and Progress: Anti-Catholicism in Mid Nineteenth-Century Nova Scotia," Dalhousie Review, 64 (Fall 1984).

<sup>66</sup> Scott W. See, Riots in New Brunswick: Orange Nativism and Social Violence in the 1840s (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993); Scott W. See, "The Orange Order and Social Violence in Mid-Nineteenth Century Saint John," Acadiensis 13 (Autumn 1983): 68-92.

<sup>67</sup> Nicholas Meagher, The Religious Warfare in Nova Scotia. 1855-1860. Its Political Aspect: The Honourable Joseph Howe's Part in It and the Attitude of Catholics (Halifax: s.n., 1927), 15.

<sup>68</sup> T.W. Acheson, Saint John. The Making of a Colonial Urban Community (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

<sup>69</sup> Peter M. Toner, "The New Brunswick Schools Question," Canadian Catholic Historical Association Study Sessions 1970: 85-95; John I. Little, "New Brunswick Reaction to the Manitoba Schools' Question," Acadiensis (Spring 1972): 43-71; George F. Stanley, "The Caraquet Riots of 1875," Acadiensis, (Autumn 1972): 21-38.

the Maritimes” showing in detail how they got the vote and the right to hold public office.<sup>70</sup>

All of these provide useful comparisons to the Island context. The various histories of Catholicism in the Maritimes also contain relevant information on Protestant-Catholic relations.<sup>71</sup>

Newfoundland does not have any work of quite the same character as the three major works noted above for the other Atlantic Provinces. Still its general and ecclesiastical histories certainly do cover Protestant-Catholic relations reasonably well and there have been some articles which cover specific issues. Five articles<sup>72</sup> give a good overview of significant portions of the history of Protestant-Catholic relations from 1729-1855. Hans Rollman’s “Religious Enfranchisement and Roman Catholics in Eighteenth-Century Newfoundland” covers the eighteenth century but is focussed on the 1784 proclamation by Governor Campbell that gave Catholics religious freedom. Mary Mulcahy’s “The Catholic Church in Newfoundland: The Pre-Emancipation Years” summarizes well the legal disabilities Catholics lived under from 1729-84, the anti-Catholic flare ups of 1755-6 and 1765, and the more positive relations during the tenure of their first three Bishops (1784-1829). Raymond J. Lahey’s “Catholicism and Colonial Policy in Newfoundland, 1779-1845,” traces the change from tranquil relations between Protestants and Catholics to the

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<sup>70</sup> John Garner, “The Enfranchisement of Roman Catholics in the Maritimes,” The Canadian Historical Review, 34 (Sept 1953): 203-18.

<sup>71</sup> See Leo J. Hynes, The Catholic Irish in New Brunswick (Moncton: no publisher, 1992); J. Brian Hanington, Every Popish Person. The Story of Roman Catholicism in Nova Scotia and the Church of Halifax, 1604-1984 (Halifax: Archdiocese of Halifax, 1984).

<sup>72</sup> Hans Rollman, “Religious Enfranchisement and Roman Catholics in Eighteenth-Century Newfoundland,” in Religion and Identity, ed Terence Murphy and Cyril Byrne (St John’s: Jespersen Press, 1987); Mary Mulcahy, “The Catholic Church in Newfoundland: The Pre-Emancipation Years,” CCHA Historical Studies 52 (1985): 5-34; Raymond J. Lahey, “Catholicism and Colonial Policy in Newfoundland, 1779-1845,” in Creed and Culture: The Place of English Speaking Catholics in Canadian Society, 1750-1930, ed Terrence Murphy and Gerald Stortz, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993); Phillip McCann, “Culture, State, Formation, and the Invention of Tradition: Newfoundland, 1832-1855,” in The Invention of Canada. Readings in Pre-Confederation History, ed Chad Gaffield (Toronto: Copp Clark Longman, 1994); Phillip McCann, “Bishop Fleming and the Politicization of the Irish Roman Catholics in Newfoundland, 1830-1850,” in Murphy and Byrne.

spark in the election of 1832 that caused Newfoundland to be the first region to begin their sectarian war phase. He brings out the seeds of discord that had been planted in the previous decade that enabled this spark to catch fire. It provides an interesting parallel to P.E.I. which also had its borrowed peace shattered by a huge spark, but in P.E.I.'s case the spark was violence which eventually led to great political division, whereas in Newfoundland's case it was political division which eventually led to great episodes of violence. Phillip McCann's two articles trace the rise of the sectarian wars in Newfoundland after this spark was lit, especially in regard to their political aspects and the role of the ultramontane Bishop Fleming in them.

Also of relevance in this matter is John Edward Fitzgerald's thesis on Irish-Newfoundland Roman Catholicism from 1829-1850, and his subsequent article on Bishop Fleming, but they are not as relevant to our study as it might at first appear, and they are definitely not Newfoundland's equivalent of Robertson's or Johnston's works. Their focus is more on the Catholic Church itself, Fitzgerald's thesis being that the roots of the Protestant-Catholic conflict was in the first instance a factional conflict between the older style of accommodationist Catholics in Newfoundland and those with the newer ultramontane spirit.<sup>73</sup> McCann also has three excellent articles that trace the education wars in Newfoundland from the 1830s until 1969. The only parallels to P.E.I. really are the use of elite accommodation in arriving at a solution that would be satisfactory to the religious leaders, but the solution itself was the precise opposite of the education system established on the Island,<sup>74</sup> and their education wars were as often between Anglicans and Dissenting

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<sup>73</sup> John Edward Fitzgerald, "Conflict and Culture in Irish-Newfoundland Roman Catholicism, 1829-1850" (PhD thesis, University of Ottawa, 1997); "Michael Anthony Fleming and Ultramontanist in Irish-Newfoundland Roman Catholicism, 1829-1850," *Historical Studies* 64 (January 1, 1998): 27-44.

<sup>74</sup> See p 205.

groups as between Protestant and Catholics.<sup>75</sup>

There also is not anything like the three Maritime books for Ontario but there are some useful articles, most notably by J.R. Miller<sup>76</sup> and John Moir.<sup>77</sup> The former, while ostensibly about the whole country, and to a small degree touching on most areas, suffers from the 'Central Canada' is Canada malady. The latter is focussed just on Toronto but in view of its central place in the province it also serves as a useful overview of Protestant-Catholic relations in the whole of Ontario. Moir's phases of these relations dovetails very nicely with those I have laid out: a period of toleration from the Conquest to the late-1840s; then a period of confrontation until the end of the century; then another period of tolerance; and finally a period of Protestant-Catholic co-operation ushered in by Vatican II. Neil Smith's article is an excellent introduction to the religious tensions in Ontario prior to Confederation, showing how much of their anti-Catholic expression emanated from the United Kingdom and south of the border but also that it was all coloured by one huge local factor, the historic French-English conflict in Upper and Lower Canada.<sup>78</sup> Other works have a narrower focus. Martin Galvin has a very good summary of the Jubilee Riots in

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<sup>75</sup> Phillip McCann, "The 'No Popery' Crusade and the Newfoundland School System," CCHA Historical Studies 58 (1991): 77-99; "The Politics of Denominational Education in the Nineteenth Century in Newfoundland" and "Denominational Education in the Twentieth Century in Newfoundland," in The Vexed Question: Denominational Education in a Secular Age, ed. William A. McKim, 30-79 (St John's: Breakwater Books, 1988). P.J. Warren's "Church and State in Canadian Education" (102-25) in the same volume is an excellent short summary of public funding for religious education in each province of Canada.

<sup>76</sup> J.R. Miller, "Anti-Catholicism in Canada: From the British Conquest to the Great War," in Murphy and Stortz, 25-48; "Bigotry in the North Atlantic Triangle: Irish, British and American Influences on Canadian Anti-Catholicism, 1850-1900," Studies in Religion, XVI (1987): 289-301; "Anti-Catholic Thought in Victorian Canada," Canadian Historical Review, 66 (1985): 474-94.

<sup>77</sup> John S. Moir, "Toronto's Protestants and Their Perceptions of Their Roman Catholic Neighbours," in Catholics at the Gathering Place, eds Mark G. McGowan and Brian P. Clarke, 313-25. Toronto: CCHA, 1993.

<sup>78</sup> Neil Gregor Smith, "Religious Tension in Pre-Confederation Politics," Canadian Journal of Theology, IX (1963): 249-62.

Toronto in 1875.<sup>79</sup> Mark G. McGowan researched the Episcopal Reports of 1900-1901 to see what they revealed about Protestant-Catholic relations at the time.<sup>80</sup> They showed there was no overt hostility but still the Catholics were very guarded and kept to themselves, much as it was on P.E.I. at the time. There are also several helpful works that look at the Irish and the Orange Order in the province<sup>81</sup> and a number of useful articles produced by the Canadian Catholic Historical Association (CCHA).<sup>82</sup>

Several things make the present study unique. Prince Edward Island provides an ideal context for doing social historical studies. It is small but it is also a complete society, with its own government and even at one point its own coinage. It is therefore possible to paint a full picture that provides a relevant comparison to other larger locales and go into significant depth because the data is not too large and unwieldy. This has allowed me to cover two centuries of Protestant-Catholic relations in a fairly in-depth way. Thus this work is unique in the breadth of material that is dealt with in a detailed fashion. The closest to this would be Billington's work on the U.S.A. Another aspect that makes this work different is that it is not a study of anti-Catholicism on P.E.I. but a study of Protestant-Catholic relations, with anti-Catholicism only as an essential component of that. This focus forces one to present a more balanced picture than is often the case in works in this field,

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<sup>79</sup> Martin A. Galvin, "The Jubilee Riots in Toronto, 1875," Study Sessions 26 (1959): 93-107.

<sup>80</sup> Mark G. McGowan, "Rethinking Catholic-Protestant Relations in Canada: The Episcopal Reports of 1900-1901," CCHA Historical Studies, 59 (1992): 11-32.

<sup>81</sup> Robert O'Driscoll & Lorna Reynolds, eds, The Untold Story: The Irish in Canada (Toronto: Celtic Arts of Canada, 1988); C.J. Houston and W.J. Smyth, "Transferred Loyalties: Orangeism in the United States and Ontario," American Review of Canadian Studies, 14, 2 (1984); David A. Wilson, ed, The Orange Order in Canada (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007); Bruce S. Elliott, "Irish Protestants in Canada and Orangeism" ([http://www.multiculturalcanada.ca/mcc/ecp/content/irish\\_protestants.html](http://www.multiculturalcanada.ca/mcc/ecp/content/irish_protestants.html)).

<sup>82</sup> See CCHA, vols 3,5,8,22,41,46,51,52,54,55,68,69.

for the good relations between the sects<sup>83</sup> were just as much a fact of history as the negative, and anti-Protestant sentiment was just as real as anti-Catholic (Protestants, being in the ‘ascendancy’, just had more opportunity to express their bias). Most of the comparable works, while they make some reference to positive incidents as well as to anti-Protestant feeling, are focussed on anti-Catholicism or on especially bitter periods of sectarianism, which almost inevitably results in drawing a darker picture than really existed. There are a few works that do strike this balance well, particularly Stern’s essay on the Southern States, Bruce’s work on Scotland and most works on Newfoundland. Newfoundland, like P.E.I., where the populations are so evenly split on the basis of sect, almost demand this more balanced approach; but Bruce’s works have very intentionally challenged the conventional wisdom by a fresh examination of the evidence. What is unique in this thesis, however, is its extensive use of oral history, no other work in this field using more than just snippets of this very valuable source material.

The next chapter will trace the history of Protestant-Catholic relations on P.E.I. from the time of its initial colonization by the French and then through its first eighty years under the British.

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<sup>83</sup> I use the term sect in this thesis not in the restricted sense used by sociologists to refer a sub-section of a denomination that sets itself off as effectively being a “pure remnant,” but in its more popular usage as being basically equivalent to denomination.



# PART I

“The Pioneer Years:  
A Time of Borrowed Peace”  
1720-1847

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Religious bigotry was part of the baggage  
the settlers brought with them to this place.  
They were all Christians, and prayed to the same God,  
but some brought Bibles - while others brought beads.  
Some upheld the presbytery, others defended the papacy.  
Some wouldn't eat meat on Fridays, others wouldn't bake a cake on Sundays. . . .  
Friendship and goodwill often prevailed over these ancient prejudices,  
Which is to say Islander's Christianity often prevailed over their religion.  
But it was always a factor with which one had to reckon.<sup>1</sup>

#### The Old World Baggage

The sectarian divide on Prince Edward Island, of course, did not originate there, but was rooted in the historic Protestant-Catholic hostilities in Europe. There is a sense in which it is ultimately rooted in Luther nailing his 95 theses to the Wittenberg door in 1517, but that will not much aid one's understanding of what happened on the Island, for the Lutheran form of Protestantism made little mark on P.E.I.,<sup>2</sup> and the same can be said for all the other Continental versions of the Reformation. The form the Protestant Church took on P.E.I. derived from its specific incarnation in the British Isles, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, and most prominently Scottish Presbyterian. The Catholics, meanwhile, primarily came from the religiously oppressed Scottish and Irish populations of the United Kingdom, along with a remnant of the expelled Acadians and the native Mi'kmaq population. The divide was not, however, just the result of theological wrangling. Equally important was the

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<sup>1</sup> David Weale, "Bible and Beads," unpublished poem found in the "Weale Collection," 00N (see p 201, n 18).

<sup>2</sup> In 1881 there were four Lutherans on P.E.I., and only 160 in 2001.

struggle for world conquest between the Protestant English and Catholic French Empires.

Sectarian attitudes made the trip across the Atlantic embodied in the English, Scottish, Irish and French immigrants who settled on the Island. For Protestants the memories of Bloody Mary, the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre, the Spanish Armada, the wars with Catholic France, were part of the baggage they took to their new home, just as much as the oatmeal, clothing and rudimentary tools they carried. The stories of the martyrdoms of the Protestants under Mary were passed down to generations of Protestants in Foxe's Book of Martyrs, which book for many Protestants was second in importance only to the Bible, even up until the early part of the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> As one Islander remarked in 1826: "Our forefathers were taught by the light of the fires of Smithfield, and which are handed down to posterity in characters of blood."<sup>4</sup> For Protestants in the British Empire the success of the Empire was tied up with its faith: "In so far as Britain was free, democratic and economically prosperous, it was because it was not Catholic."<sup>5</sup> It was therefore very important in their mind that if they were going to maintain their religious, intellectual and political freedoms, they remain vigilant against the Catholic threat.

Scottish, Irish and French Catholics likewise carried their own attitudinal baggage to the New World. This was especially true for Irish Catholics who brought with them their many resentments against the British who had confiscated their land and kept them repressed for two centuries under a severe set of penal laws. They also brought memories of Orangemen, 31 year land leases, and Cromwell giving them the choice to go "to hell or to Connaught." And they carried a political determination to fight for their rights, honed in the O'Connell-led battles at home for emancipation and home rule. Scottish Catholics,

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<sup>3</sup> See William Haller, Foxe's Book of Martyrs and the Elect Nation (London: Trinity Press, 1963).

<sup>4</sup> Register, Feb 21, 1826.

<sup>5</sup> Brewer and Higgins 5.

while not so directly oppressed, had come from a homeland that had not given them freedom of religion until 1793, and some of the early Scottish Catholic settlers were fleeing religious persecution in the Hebrides. The Acadians lived with the horrors of the deportations of 1755 and 1758 in their memories and the struggle to remain neutral while caught between two colonial powers. While some Islanders had fairly healthy relations with people of the other camp, many harbored fears, resentments and deep distrust of the other.

### The French Colony (1720-58)

The first European settlement on Prince Edward Island was by the French in 1720, who called it Île Saint-Jean. The battle for Empire between England and France was even felt in this remote outpost, in wars from 1745-8 and 1756-8. The Island's population grew from 735 in 1748 to nearly 3,000 prior to the Acadian expulsion of 1755. A missionary on the Island wrote in 1753 of the "almost general nudity, to a high degree, of the refugees. Many are in such a state that they cannot work in winter having nothing to cover themselves against the cold, day or night."<sup>6</sup> In 1755 Colonel Lawrence decided to expel the Acadians from Nova Scotia after they balked over making the unconditional oath of allegiance. About 6000-7000 Acadians were expelled to the American Colonies from Nova Scotia between 1755-57, while another 4000 or so escaped to Quebec, the Chaleur Bay area of New Brunswick, and Île Saint-Jean. About 1400 landed on the Island, naked and poor.

Following the destruction of Louisbourg on July 27, 1758, Lord Rollo began the process of deporting the Island's Acadian population (which now numbered about 4,700) on August 17. Around 3,100 people were sent first to England and then to France, but over half died (679 drowned when three ships went down at sea and another 970 died from disease). Most of those in the Malpeque area (the most difficult area to get to from Port La

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<sup>6</sup> Cited by Bona Arsenault, History of the Acadians (Ottawa: Editions Lemecac, 1978), 114.

Joie) escaped either to Miramichi or Quebec City, about 1400-1500 in all, while another thirty families went into hiding on the Island.<sup>7</sup>

Though it seems to be rarely noticed, the suffering that the Island Acadians went through was arguably the greatest of any of the Acadian groups. Not only did they count the greatest number of deaths among the deportees, but also many of them had just recently fled Acadia and now they were unjustly being forced from their homes again. The Treaty of Paris in 1763 ended the Seven Years War and the struggle between Britain and France for control of the New World. In October of that year a royal proclamation created the following colonies: Quebec, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia (inclusive of Cape Breton, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick).

### Ethnic Profile

Immediately following the Seven Year's War Samuel Holland surveyed P.E.I. and sub-divided the Island into 67 townships. On July 23, 1767, the townships were awarded by lottery (they have been called lots ever since) to English, Scottish and Irish Protestants in return for their services to the Crown, which laid the basis for the land issue that would dominate Island politics for the next century. The Proprietors were required to pay an annual quitrent and settle their lands with "foreign Protestants," as had been successfully done in 1753 in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia. No Proprietor, however, fulfilled their obligations. A few did recruit settlers, but all of these were from the British Isles and many were Catholic. By 1768 P.E.I. started to receive a trickle of immigrants from the British Isles, the census that year showing 68 English-speaking people and 203 French. From 1770-75 a good number of immigrant ships landed, mostly from Scotland, raising the

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<sup>7</sup> Statistics based primarily on Earle Lockerby, Deportation of the Prince Edward Island Acadians (Halifax: Nimbus, 2008). For more on the Acadian story in general see Dean Jobb, The Acadians. A People's Story of Exile and Triumph (Mississauga: John Wiley and Sons, 2005).

population to over 1200. The American War of Independence brought this to an end but also led to about 600 Loyalists settling on the Island after the war.<sup>8</sup> In 1803 the largest immigrant group (over 800 people) arrived, nearly two-thirds being from the Isle of Skye and nearly all Protestants. They settled on Lord Selkirk's lots near Belfast, P.E.I. The first half of the nineteenth century saw many more ships arrive with Scottish, Irish and English immigrants, but by the 1850s immigration to the Island had effectively come to an end.

The Island's population numbered 8,730 in 1805, 27,000 in 1829, 71,496 in 1855, peaked at 109,078 in 1891, bottomed out around 88,000 in 1931, hit 112,000 in 1971, and now is close to 140,000. In the 1881 census there were 108,891 Islanders, 43.3% of whom were Catholic and 56.7% Protestants (31% Presbyterian, 12.4% Methodist, 6.6% Anglican, 5.7% Baptist, 1% other<sup>9</sup>): "An aggressive Catholic plurality within a vulnerable Protestant majority."<sup>10</sup> Their ethnic origins were Scottish 45%, Irish 23.3%, English 19.6%, French 10%, other 2.1%. The French and the vast majority of the Irish (about 90%<sup>11</sup>) were Catholics but so were a significant number of the Scots (about 27%). In the 2001 census 47.5% were Catholic and 45% Protestant, less than 1% were other religions and about 6.5% were no religion. The main Protestant sub-divisions were the United Church 20%, Presbyterian 6%, Anglicans 5%, and Baptist 4.5%. Ethnically it is impossible to interpret the census data of the last 50 years so as to procure any accurate ethnic breakdown.

There was a clear socio-economic hierarchical structure in Island society based on ethnicity and religion, which has only levelled out in the last 30-40 years. The English (and Irish Protestants) were at the top, the Scots next, then the Irish Catholics, with the Acadians

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<sup>8</sup> See p 51.

<sup>9</sup> All percentages given for Protestant sects in this paragraph are of the total population.

<sup>10</sup> Edward MacDonald, New Ireland: The Irish on P.E.I. (Charlottetown: Prince Edward Island Museum and Heritage Foundation, 1990), 17.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid 23. The 1941 census lists 87% of the Irish and 26% of the Scots as Catholics.

firmly at the bottom. The Mi'kmaq really did not chart at all. The Maritime Mi'kmaq had been Catholic since 1610 but they really played no role in the story of Protestant - Catholic relations on the Island. I will now give an overview of each of the four main ethnic communities.

After the expulsion in 1758 there were about thirty Acadian families who remained on the Island. They were granted permission to stay in 1764 and established one settlement in each county - Malpeque (Prince), Rustico (Queens) and Fortune Bay (Kings). More exiled Acadians returned and by 1798 there were 102 Acadian families living in these communities, from whom are descended about 98% of the Island's Acadians. In these early years the Island's governing authorities still had some doubts concerning the loyalty of its Acadian population,<sup>12</sup> but by the time Governor Fanning left in 1804 he was praising them for their peaceful behaviour and "unshaken loyalty to the King."<sup>13</sup>

The proprietary land system on the Island negatively affected the Acadians more than any other ethnic group. As the first people group to arrive on the Island they were also very often the first to have cleared their land, but lacking ownership rights or legally binding lease arrangements or even just the funds to pay their rents, they in turn often had this land confiscated. It would then be sold or let, often to more well-to-do English farmers, and the Acadians would be forced to move and begin from scratch again on a new parcel of land. As they also had the fewest resources of any of the immigrant communities on the Island they were generally impotent in legally fighting any injustices. These realities forced the Acadians to abandon two of their three original settlements, at Bay Fortune<sup>14</sup> and

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<sup>12</sup> See Georges Arsenault, The Acadian Experience in Prince Edward Island, a lecture given at U.P.E.I. on Nov 24, 1982 (Charlottetown: Extension Department of U.P.E.I.), 23-4; and The Island Acadians, 1720-1980, trans. Sally Ross (Charlottetown: Ragweed Press, 1989), 54.

<sup>13</sup> Colonial Office, 226/21, pp 529-36, cited by G. Arsenault, Island Acadians, 96.

<sup>14</sup> See G. Arsenault, Island Acadians, 56-65.

Malpeque,<sup>15</sup> in the late-1700s and early-1800s. Some of the tenants in the former moved to Rollo Bay, while those in the latter established new settlements in Tignish, Bloomfield, Egmont Bay, the Mont Carmel area and Miscouche. There was significant tension and even some religious oppression in the Malpeque case – between Colonel Compton, the English Protestants he invited to be his new tenants, and his Acadian tenants.

The Acadians developed in French communities that were culturally isolated from the other ethnic communities. John MacGregor noted in 1828 that the Acadians throughout the Maritimes were always by themselves in distinct settlements and he had only heard of four examples of intermarriage among them.<sup>16</sup> Island Acadians did not hate the British; they just kept their distance, wanting to be insulated from outside cultural influences. They simply sought to “live in peace, away from proprietors and people who were hostile to their culture and their values.”<sup>17</sup> MacGregor said of them:

With few exceptions, they are harmless, honest, and inoffensive, and have not at all times received the kindest treatment from their neighbours. . . . The Acadian French . . . adhere more rigidly to [their faith] than the Catholics in Europe do; and indeed more so than the Scotch and Irish Catholics. . . . These people are not in such easy circumstances as the other inhabitants of the island. . . . few of them can either read or write . . . they are poor . . .<sup>18</sup>

Still this did not necessarily mean they were unhappy, if we can trust the testimony of an outsider (Englishman Edward Walsh), who reported in 1803: “Of the Old Inhabitants there are 650 Acadian French settlers who live in three handsome Villages in the happiest State of

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<sup>15</sup> See Ernest MacDonald, ed, The Burke Chronicles (self published, 2007), 99-112 (the printed version of Father Burke’s written history of Catholicism on the Island completed about 1885); and Rev John C. MacMillan, The Early History of the Catholic Church in Prince Edward Island, 1721-1835 (Quebec: L’Evenement, 1905), 173-6.

<sup>16</sup> John MacGregor, Historical and Descriptive Sketches of the Maritime Colonies of British America (Toronto: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1968, originally published 1828), 195.

<sup>17</sup> G. Arsenault, Island Acadians, 67.

<sup>18</sup> John MacGregor, Sketches, 74-5.



rural Simplicity.”<sup>19</sup>

The process by which they began their integration into the wider society began “seventy years after the conquest [when] they produced a native priest (Sylvain Ephrem Poirier) and from that date [1828], a new era dawned for them.”<sup>20</sup> In 1854 the first Acadian, Stanislaus Perry, was elected to the Provincial Legislature. His election “marked the beginning of an important transformation in the Acadian community on the Island. It began to move out of its century-old isolation and to open up to the English-speaking world that surrounded it.”<sup>21</sup> He would go on to win ten provincial elections, and four of eight federal ones, over the last half of the nineteenth century. In spite of these and other advances, however, it has really only been in the last few decades of the twentieth century that the Acadians have attained economic and political parity with the other ethnic groups on the Island. Prior to that they experienced a significant amount of discrimination, as one of their own historians noted: “It is no secret that the Acadians as a cultural group have been rather despised by the majority group over a very long period. To be an Acadian or a Frenchman was, in fact, to be considered of the lowest class by many people. This attitude created a large inferiority complex among the Acadians . . . [leading many] to anglicize themselves,”<sup>22</sup> including its first MLA (Member of Legislative Assembly) who was born a Poirier.

The Acadians suffered more for their faith and ethnicity than any other group on the Island. Not only were they looked down upon, but many were forced off of their cleared lands around 1800, and most significantly their ancestors had suffered through the horrific

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<sup>19</sup> H.T. Holman, ed, “An Account of Prince Edward’s Island, 1803 [by Edward Walsh],” *Island Magazine* 15 (Spring/Summer 1984): 12.

<sup>20</sup> J. Henri Blanchard, *The Acadians of Prince Edward Island* (no publishing data, 1964), 70, 143.

<sup>21</sup> G. Arsenault, *Island Acadians*, 97.

<sup>22</sup> G. Arsenault, *Acadian Experience*, 12-13.

expulsions of the 1750s. The expulsions initially had a major impact on their psyche, as another of their historians noted: “During the first few decades of British rule, they lived more or less in a state of fear and trembling until they found that the new authorities were not disposed to treat them harshly.”<sup>23</sup> What is perhaps most remarkable in all this, however, is that there has not been any great resentment expressed among Acadians over these events. As far as we know there was no *complainte* ever composed in Acadian balladry about the deportation from Île Saint-Jean, and no mythologising of the tragedy as Longfellow did for the Great Upheaval from Nova Scotia with his *Evangeline* poem.<sup>24</sup> Part of the explanation for this likely lies within the psyche of Island Acadians (see the following paragraph), but it may also be related to the different historical contexts of the two events. The mainland Acadians were British subjects who were deported during a time of peace, while the Island Acadians were the subjects of the King of France who were conquered in a time of war, and to deport the conquered people at that time was not uncommon. It is also worthy to note that a fair number of Islanders of Acadian descent on the Island have little to no knowledge of the 1758 expulsion. Even the mother of popular Island folksinger Lenny Gallant said she was never taught about it when growing up in the Acadian community of North Rustico.<sup>25</sup> Since the celebrations of the 400th anniversary of the settlement on Dochet Island (2004) and the 250th anniversary of the P.E.I. expulsion (2008), however, awareness of the event is starting to spread.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Blanchard 143. He also noted that “they have long since forgiven and largely forgotten the wrongs and neglect they suffered in other days.” (144).

<sup>24</sup> Georges Arsénault, “The Island’s Acadian Balladry Tradition,” *Island Magazine* 37 (Spring/Summer 1995): 4.

<sup>25</sup> Fanny Gallant, interview by Melanie Doucette, Mar, 2008, which can be found in “BColl” (see p 201, n 18).

<sup>26</sup> Among English-speaking Islanders the lack of awareness is even more astounding, though it too has grown since the anniversary celebrations. Most Maritimers have heard about *Evangeline* and the expulsion of the Acadians from Nova Scotia, but I have concluded, from my fairly extensive informal polling, that most Islanders have not heard about the expulsion from P.E.I., including many well educated people, nor have any of the small number of Acadians from New Brunswick that I

The question is why did these events not engender more bitter feelings? The answer seems to be that the Acadians had endured 150 years of British / French conflict and had learned through it the art of neutrality. The Seven Years War ended this conflict conclusively, and the land was now British. The Acadians just accepted this as they always had, and so the Protestant ascendancy was just a normal fact of life for them. All they wanted was to be let alone to live in peace. Their defence mechanism was not anger, which they would not have had any opportunity to effectively express anyway, but isolation. Former priest Gerry Steele, son of a Scottish Catholic and an Acadian mother, saw the submission of the Acadians as being a “survival tactic in coping with impossible odds.”<sup>27</sup> As such they remained politically uninvolved for nearly a century. Their focus was on surviving, not making changes in society. When Catholics did make a political imprint on Island politics it was primarily by members of the next two ethnic groups.

The Irish came to the Island in three waves: “The colonial pioneers (1767-1810), the southeastern immigrants (1810-35), and the over 3,000 Monaghan settlers (1830-48).”<sup>28</sup> The first were a mix of Anglicans, Huguenots, Presbyterians and Catholics. The last two waves were nearly all Catholics. Almost all the Irish immigrants arrived prior to the Potato Famine, only one boat landing during it in 1847, the *Lady Constable* with 419 passengers. After this “Irish immigration to the Island declined to a mere trickle.”<sup>29</sup> These Irish settlers “had endured poverty, bloodshed, injustice, exile, and famine. They had resented, resisted,

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have queried.

<sup>27</sup> Gerry Steele, Growing Up with Julie (Charlottetown: Acorn Press, 2008), 153. His extended reflection on learning about the expulsion in the Acadian village of Miscouche can be found on pp 149-54.

<sup>28</sup> Brendan O’Grady, Exiles and Islanders. The Irish Settlers on Prince Edward Island (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004), 4. Much of the information in the Irish section is derived from this fine work.

<sup>29</sup> O’Grady 156.

and rebelled. And whether they remained at home or went abroad, they remembered.”<sup>30</sup>

For about a half century after the founding of the colony in 1769, the political, judicial and business leadership on the Island was dominated by the Anglo-Irish Protestants, “whose function was to establish British law and British institutions and to ensure that the Island would be a loyal Protestant colony.”<sup>31</sup> This included its first governor, Walter Patterson (1769-86); its first Lieutenant Governor, Thomas DesBrisay (1779-84); its first Attorney-General, Phillips Callbeck (1770-4); and its first and only regular Protestant clergyman until 1807, Anglican Theophilus Desbrisay (1775-1823). The Irish Protestants in time, however, effectively assimilated into P.E.I.’s English society, and to be Irish on the Island increasingly came to mean Catholic.<sup>32</sup>

The third Irish wave, the Monaghan settlers, were Ulster Catholics and they arrived soon after the Irish had become politicized under Daniel O’Connell in his successful campaign for emancipation. As such they carried their experience of religious discrimination, unjust land policies and political advocacy for their rights with them to the Island, even more so than the second wave. They also found many of the same problems on P.E.I. as at home: “Absentee landlords, religious bigots, ethnic rivals, and - until 1830 - penal laws. The prejudice cut both ways, and the Irish were both victims and aggressors. . . . Prejudice was more than just a local phenomenon; anti-Irish feeling was deeply ingrained in British and American culture.”<sup>33</sup> Even so the intolerance towards the Irish on the Island seems to have been less marked than it was in many parts of North America, and certainly clashes between the Orange and the Green were not as commonplace there as they were in New Brunswick and Newfoundland. Also, the Island’s

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<sup>30</sup> O’Grady 128.

<sup>31</sup> O’Grady 13.

<sup>32</sup> E. MacDonald, New Ireland, 33.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid 17,18.

Irish Catholics do not seem to have been as anti-British as they were in other parts of Canada because nearly all of them arrived prior to the famine.

P.E.I. is the most Scottish province in Canada and in conjunction with the eastern part of Nova Scotia and Cape Breton forms the most significant Gaelic community in the world outside of Scotland. People of Scottish descent are the largest ethnic group on the Island, about a quarter of these in the nineteenth century being Catholic, and the vast majority (about 80%) Highlanders and Islanders. The Isle of Skye was the single largest source of Scottish immigrants.<sup>34</sup>

These early emigrants left because of difficulties at home, ranging from clearances to rental increases to religious persecution. For centuries the English and Scottish ascendancy in the lowlands had tried to impose political, religious, cultural and linguistic uniformity on the Highlands, and attempted to exterminate Gaelic culture in the process, especially following the Battle of Culloden in 1746. All this effectively brought Gaelic autonomy and the clan system to an end. When out-migration happened Gaelic Scotland was a broken world. Despite this gloomy picture, however, Mike Kennedy argues that the Gaels prior to 1820 did not leave home because they were destitute or despairing but they left “as a positive response to the diminishing possibilities available to them in their homeland.”<sup>35</sup> The early emigrants were not the bottom of society but were mostly sober industrious farmers, many being Tacksmen<sup>36</sup> and chief tenants. They were fairly well off, comparatively, and came to P.E.I. primarily to join their relatives who had already settled

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<sup>34</sup> The primary source of the information in this section comes from Mike Kennedy, “Is Leis An Tighearna An Talamh Agus An Lan (The Earth and All That It Contains Belongs to God): The Scottish Gaelic Settlement History of Prince Edward Island” (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1995). A shortened version of this can be found in “‘The People Are Leaving.’ Highland Immigration to Prince Edward Island,” *Island Magazine* 53 (Spring/Summer 2003): 31-41.

<sup>35</sup> Kennedy 45.

<sup>36</sup> A tack is a Scottish term for “lease.” A tacksman would rent a large tack from the laird who owned the land, and to whom he was usually related, and then sub-let it to the lower classes. As such he connected the higher and lower orders in Highland society.

there. It was only those who came at the end, especially those fleeing the 1846-51 potato famine, who were so downtrodden they had to accept whatever charity the English and lowland Scots gave to them, but this is the period when the fewest Highlanders emigrated to P.E.I.

The first large group of Scots arrived on the Island in 1770. They were English-speaking Lowlanders who settled at Stanhope and Covehead. Soon after the first Highlanders to emigrate to Canada settled on Lot 18. Their boat was wrecked and the Acadians provided the main help in getting them through the first winter. The next year seventy more Highlanders arrived. All these immigrants were Presbyterian.

In 1772 the first Catholic Gaels arrived with John MacDonald, the 8th laird of Glenaladale and one of the most influential landlords on P.E.I. in its early years. A serious religious persecution on South Uist was the motivation for about a quarter of these passengers leaving.<sup>37</sup> They initially settled on Lot 36 near Tracadie. For the rest of this early period Catholics were a disproportionately large percentage of the Highland emigrants, and religious persecution continued to be a significant factor in this inequality, particularly for the immigrations of 1787 and 1790.<sup>38</sup> Also the Catholic *Oughton* settlers who came with Lord Selkirk were partially driven out by the religious tensions on their island, though more so by the rising rents. The prime motivation for leaving, however, began to change towards the end of the century: "Where religious persecution had been one of the important factors which had encouraged Catholic emigration to Prince Edward Island in the eighteenth century, clearance was to become an almost universal cause of discontent

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<sup>37</sup> The most thorough telling of this story is an unpublished manuscript by Callum Beck, "The 'Suffering Catholics' of South Uist and their Flight to Safety on Prince Edward Island."

<sup>38</sup> For more information see Kennedy 210-14, 27, 30, and Amelia Madeline Pope, "Catholic Scotch Settlement of Prince Edward Island," *The Catholic World* (1882), <http://www.islandregister.com/scotch.html>.

in the nineteenth.”<sup>39</sup> Scottish immigration continued until 1863. Kennedy said that: “On the whole, they quickly adjusted to the demands of the new world and provided themselves with a comfortable living in their new home. By the end of the nineteenth century the Gaidhealtachd of the Maritime provinces had roughly half the population of Gaelic Scotland. Moreover, a rich, vigorous folk-culture was established . . . [and] survived longer or to a greater extent in the New World, and in some instances, most notably with fiddling and dancing, continue to thrive.”<sup>40</sup>

The English, though dominant politically and socially on the Island, were always a minority, in 1881 numbering less than 20% of the population. Still, “in conception and reality, nineteenth-century Prince Edward Island was a British Protestant society with a British Protestant governing class.”<sup>41</sup> The Colonial government was British, the colonial language English, and the English (along with the Protestant Irish) held most of the leadership positions. In 1775 Robert Clark, a Quaker from London, established a settlement of English and Protestant Irish at New London. Then after the American War of Independence between 800-1,000 Loyalists arrived on the Island and about 600 of those settled permanently. About 60% of the Colony’s population in 1784 was Loyalist, and they were still at 25% in 1798.<sup>42</sup> Most of the English influx, however, occurred from 1817-54. During this time some of the wealthiest and most influential families on the Island were of English ancestry. Religiously “Islanders of English extraction were almost all Protestants, and tended to vote for the Tory party, which represented the interests of the

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<sup>39</sup> Kennedy 266.

<sup>40</sup> Kennedy 497-8.

<sup>41</sup> E. MacDonald, New Ireland, 17.

<sup>42</sup> Orlo Jones, “The Loyalists of the Island of St. John or Prince Edward Island,” The P.E.I. Genealogical Society Newsletter, February, 1984: 6-10. See also Orlo Jones and Doris Haslam, An Island Refuge: Loyalists and Disbanded Troops on the Island of Saint John (Charlottetown: The Abegweit Branch of the United Empire Loyalist Association of Canada, 1983).

overwhelmingly English and Protestant family compact.”<sup>43</sup>

### Religious Profile

The largest denomination on the Island throughout pretty well all of its history has been Roman Catholicism. Its roots go back to the French period (1720-58). There were 18 Roman Catholic churches in 1835, 27 in 1859, and are 61 today. In 1855 the Irish and Scots each accounted for roughly 38% of the Catholic community, the Acadians about 22% and the Mi'kmaq 1%. By 1931 the Irish were 39%, the French 33%, the Scottish only 21%, the English 6% and the Mi'kmaq less than 1%.<sup>44</sup> The English have always been but a negligible part of the Catholic population, and the Catholics of Acadian and especially Mi'kmaq descent historically exercised but little influence in their Church. The Scots were the dominant ethnic group within the Church for many years, monopolizing the episcopal seat throughout the nineteenth century and dominating the faculty at St Andrews College, later St Dunstons. There was some rivalry evident between them and the Irish Catholics, though “it certainly never approached the open enmity that existed between Irish and Scots Catholics in Nova Scotia or New Brunswick.”<sup>45</sup> By about 1900 the two communities were equal partners.

The first priest on the Island after it became a British colony was James MacDonald, who came out with the Glenaladale settlers in 1772. He died in 1785 and the Island was

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<sup>43</sup> I. R. Robertson, “Highlanders, Irishmen, and the Land Question in Nineteenth-century Prince Edward Island,” in L.M. Cullen & T.C. Smout, eds, Comparative Aspects of Scottish and Irish Economic and Social History 1600-1900 (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1976), 233-4. See also Bruce S. Elliott, “English Immigration to Prince Edward Island,” Island Magazine 40 (Fall/Winter 1996): 3-11.

<sup>44</sup> Heidi MacDonald, “The Sisters of St Martha and Prince Edward Island Social Institutions, 1916-1982” (PhD diss, UNB, 2000), 128.

<sup>45</sup> G. Edward MacDonald, The History of St. Dunstan's University 1855-1956 (Charlottetown: SDU Board of Governors and P.E.I. Museum and Heritage Foundation, 1989), 54. For three examples of this rivalry on P.E.I. see his book, pp 22, 67 (n 18).



without a priest until Father Angus MacEachern<sup>46</sup> arrived in 1790. By the year he died, 1835, he had been joined by four others. This included Father Bernard Macdonald, the first Island-born priest to minister there and the second Bishop. MacEachern's visionary solution to the priest shortage problem was the formation of St Andrew's College in 1831, which in 1855 was transformed into St Dunstan's College. On August 11, 1829, Charlottetown was named the episcopal see over P.E.I., New Brunswick and the Magdalen Islands, with Angus MacEachern as Bishop.

Irish Catholicism on the Island in the early decades, like that of the mother country, was: "A distinctively Celtic brand of Catholicism . . . Banshees and fairies and forerunners and changelings all accompanied the immigrants to the New World. For a time, at least, they prospered there. . . . As pioneer life gave way to colonial society, and the supply of missionaries improved, the practice of the faith became more regular and more orthodox."<sup>47</sup> Ultramontaniam, with its vigorous Tridentine Catholicism centred on the authority of the Pope, came to dominate the Catholic Church on the Island in the 1860s, not long after it had in Ireland (in the 1850s, subsequent to the Potato Famine). The main force behind this was Peter McIntyre, who was appointed Bishop in 1860.

Historian Wendell MacIntyre noted that "the Catholic people of the Island, comprising groups of Scottish, Irish and French descent, were a hardy race, but all of them were victims of persecution."<sup>48</sup> The initial Scottish settlement on the Island and several others<sup>49</sup> were rooted to a significant degree in religious persecution in Scotland. The Irish

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<sup>46</sup> See pp 81-83 for a more thorough discussion of his life.

<sup>47</sup> E. MacDonald, New Ireland, 23-4. Scottish Catholicism shared similar features, and Protestantism was not devoid of it.

<sup>48</sup> Rev Wendell P.H. MacIntyre, "The Longest Reign," in The Catholic Church in Prince Edward Island 1720-1979, ed. Michael F. Hennessy (Summerside: Williams and Crue, 1979), 74. The Mi'kmaq on the Island had not suffered persecution *per se* but that is not to say they were not oppressed.

<sup>49</sup> See nn 37, 38.

had suffered under the Protestant ascendancy since Henry VIII, and memories of Cromwell, King William I, the Orange Order and the Penal Laws were never far from their consciousness. The Acadians had suffered perhaps most of them all, victims of both the expulsion and an ongoing oppression. For the most part Catholics in all three groups were farmers and poor: "Separated by their ethnicity, the Catholic co-religionists shared only faith and poverty. They suffered for both."<sup>50</sup> In general it can be said that "despite being united by a common faith, Maritime Catholics largely persisted in keeping themselves in separate regional, linguistic, and ethnic compartments, and thus contributed a complicated subdivision to the overall denominational separatism [of] the Maritimes."<sup>51</sup>

From 1769-1866 Anglicanism was the established church on the Island. Part of the first Governor's (Walter Patterson) initial instructions from the Colonial Office in London (August 4, 1769) were to ensure that, "The Book of Common Prayer as by law established [is] read each Sunday and holiday; and the Blessed Sacrament administered according to the rites of the Church of England."<sup>52</sup> A yearly salary of £100 sterling was set aside for an Anglican clergyman. For several decades most of the governing class and their friends were part of the Established Church and it became identified with the conservative Family Compact in politics, thereby losing the sympathy of the common man.

Theophilus Desbrisay, son of the Lieutenant Governor, became P.E.I.'s first Protestant clergyman in 1775. St Paul's Anglican in Charlottetown, built in 1803, was the first Protestant church building on the Island. The Anglican Church up until the 1820s was almost totally centered in Charlottetown, little effort being put into reaching the rural areas, which gave full opportunity for the dissenting sects to flourish there. Not until 1824 was an

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<sup>50</sup> E. MacDonald, *SDU*, 4.

<sup>51</sup> Mason Wade, "Relations Between the French, Irish and Scottish Clergy in the Maritime Provinces, 1774-1836," *CCHA Historical Studies*, Study Sessions 1972: 33.

<sup>52</sup> The complete instructions can be found in A.B. Warburton, *A History of Prince Edward Island* (Saint John, N.B.: Barnes & Co, 1923), 461.

Anglican minister sent to a rural area, the Rev L. C. Jenkins to St Eleanors in Prince County. In 1831 the first church building for the exclusive use of the Anglicans was established in St Eleanor's. In 1869 a second church was built in Charlottetown called St Peter's. This introduced the high church liturgy to Anglicanism on P.E.I. "and resulted in a distinct cleavage of the membership of the church"<sup>53</sup> first in Charlottetown and then throughout the Island. An example of the bitter feelings it aroused comes from one of Charlottetown's leading citizens, Henry Cundall, who said of the Ritualists in 1889: "They take great delight in the observance of forms, ceremonies, and ritual . . . Their teaching is also sacerdotal and tending very strongly towards Rome, in some cases almost identical . . . ."<sup>54</sup> While the establishment of the Anglican Church and the positional power of its members made it the most powerful religious body on the Island during its first century, still its influence was definitely more limited there than it was in the other Atlantic Provinces and Ontario.

Presbyterianism came to the Island with the first Scottish emigrants in the late-1760s and early-1770s. For many years they were without clergy or church buildings. Dr James MacGregor, who was stationed in Pictou, Nova Scotia, was the first Presbyterian clergyman to visit the Island, in 1791, and by 1821 had made the last of his fourteen visits. Although he never lived on the Island "he can legitimately be regarded as the father of Presbyterianism in this province."<sup>55</sup> He was Maritime Presbyterianism's version of Father MacEachern. The Rev Dr John Keir became the first minister to permanently settle there in 1808, and in 1810 he established the first Presbyterian church at Princetown. The P.E.I. Presbytery held its

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<sup>53</sup> Percy Pope, "The Church of England in Prince Edward Island," in D.A. MacKinnon and A.B. Warburton, Past and Present of Prince Edward Island (Charlottetown: B.F. Bowen & Co., 1906), 277.

<sup>54</sup> Cited by Edward MacDonald, "The Master of Beaconsfield. Part Two: Henry J. Cundall," Island Magazine 34 (Fall/Winter 1993): 12.

<sup>55</sup> Rev John D. Cameron, "The History of the Presbyterian Church on Prince Edward Island," Abegweit Review, Fall 94 - Spring 95, 88.

first meeting on October 11, 1821. In 1828 St James Presbyterian Church was opened in Charlottetown.

Presbyterianism in Scotland and Ireland had suffered through some serious divisions since 1733 and some of these travelled to the Island but generally were not very significant there, and certainly did not spark the serious rift in the community that they did in Nova Scotia. The Island, however, did give birth to a new form of Presbyterianism, born out of a revival that took place from 1828-30, and led by the charismatic Donald McDonald.<sup>56</sup> Their churches were known as the McDonaldite churches, but are now termed the Church of Scotland, and they are almost entirely an Island sect. The split in the Church of Scotland in 1843 that led to the Free Church did not have a major impact on the Island. The re-union of all the sections of the Presbyterian Church in Canada took place in 1875. The only Presbyterian churches in Canada which did not participate were the McDonaldite ones. By 1900 Presbyterians made up 30% of the Island's population. At Church Union in 1925 over half of them joined the United Church of Canada (see below).

The largest of the dissenting denominations on the Island was the Methodist, whose origins can be dated to 1774 when Benjamin Chappell emigrated from England. He was a close friend of and correspondent with John Wesley, and though not a clergyman was still the father of Methodism on the Island. The first regular Methodist minister, John Bulpitt, arrived in 1807. In 1832 the Bible Christian Church was begun by missionary Francis Metherall but by 1884 it had re-attached itself to the other Methodist churches. By the beginning of the twentieth century Methodists were about 13% of the population. On June 10, 1925, everyone in the 68 Methodist Churches on the Island and 57% of the

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<sup>56</sup> David Weale, "'The Minister': The Reverend Donald McDonald," Island Magazine 3 (Fall/Winter 1977): 1-6.

Presbyterians joined the nationwide move to form the United Church of Canada.<sup>57</sup>

The first Baptist who came to the Island was John Scott, from Scotland, in 1806. He settled at North River. The Scotch Baptists began their work in 1810 but the Baptist Association was not begun until 1827. Their first church was built in 1836. The Disciples of Christ / Christian Churches date back to 1810 when Alexander Crawford, who had been trained by the Haldanes in Scotland, founded the Scotch Baptist churches, some of which became Baptist and some Disciples. In the early years there were a significant number of Quakers. Most prominent was Robert Clark, who began a settlement in New London in 1775, but some of the Loyalists were Quakers as well. Thus their name is prominent in the early bills of 1783 and 1785 providing rights for dissenting groups<sup>58</sup> but they seem to have been largely subsumed into other churches by the early-1800s. There were also a few from other denominations and of course today there is quite an array of sects and even a smattering of people from the major World Religions. Still, up until the 1960s the Catholics, Methodists / United, Presbyterians, Anglican, Baptist and Christian Churches were the six main denominations on the Island, accounting for about 99% of the population.

### Conclusion

The religious and ethnic make-up of Islanders had many distinct features which had an impact on the relations between Protestants and Catholics there. First, the two groups were nearly equal in numbers, the only comparable place to this in North America being Newfoundland, but there the Protestants were nearly all of English extraction and the

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<sup>57</sup> For more detail see James D. Cameron, "The Garden Distressed: Church Union and Dissent on Prince Edward Island," Island Magazine 30 (Fall/Winter 1991): 15-19; and 31 (Spring/Summer 1992): 16-22.

<sup>58</sup> See p 66.

Catholics nearly all of Irish, while historically the Scots and Irish made up nearly 70% of the Island's population. Second, while the majority of Irish in Canada were Protestant, in P.E.I. they were nearly all Catholic, again sharing this in common with Newfoundland. Thus we shall see that the Orange Order developed later in both places in comparison to Ontario and New Brunswick and came about purely out of religious motivations, very few of its members being of Irish heritage. Third, P.E.I. was and is the most Scottish province in Canada, dominantly Highlanders and Islanders, and with a disproportionate number of Catholics. Fourth, as the bulk of the Celtic immigration came to an end in the 1840s the Island did not play host to the tragically poor famine settlers. Fifth, while those of English and Anglican heritage formed the elite of Island society in general their influence was less than in the rest of Canada and fewer conflicts were centered around their dominant social position. Finally, the dissenting sects were a much smaller proportion of the population than they were in the other English-speaking Canadian colonies, due to the large number of Scottish Presbyterians (and Catholics), and so P.E.I. likewise experienced less conflict between them and the established churches.

The sectarian attitudes brought by all these groups was a fertile ground in which Protestant-Catholic conflict could be nourished. Each of the three Catholic ethnic groups had known significant persecution and oppression, their English and Irish Protestant overlords had a firm hold on the political landscape, but the large number of Catholics meant they could have an immediate impact on the political scene after emancipation and pose a real threat to the Protestant ascendancy. Still, as we shall see, this fertile soil did not produce much in the way of significant sectarian discord in the Island's first eighty years.

## CHAPTER 2

### SECTARIANISM IN EARLY POLITICS

Though this section deals with more than just Catholic Emancipation it is still the core issue underlying everything in regard to Protestant - Catholic relations during the first sixty years of the Island's history. As a necessary background to tracing how these things worked out on P.E.I., I will begin with a brief review of the penal code and the movement for Catholic emancipation in Britain, Ireland and North America.

#### The Penal Laws and Catholic Emancipation in Britain

In an attempt to maintain uniformity in their growing Kingdom Henry VIII and Elizabeth I made attendance at the Church of England compulsory for all and imposed severe fines on those who did not attend. The philosophy behind this was essentially “united we stand and divided we fall.” Catholicism at the time of Elizabeth's inauguration, and for several decades after, arguably still had the majority of hearts in England, and up until the time of William of Orange (1690) continued as a vital body. By the mid-1780s, however, there were only 70,000 Catholics in England and the faith had hit its lowest point. It was only with the coming of the Irish to England, the Oxford Movement, ultramontanistism and emancipation in the first half of the nineteenth century that it began to grow in numbers, confidence and vigour.

The main factor in the decline of Catholicism in England was a series of Penal Laws which began in Elizabeth's first year of power and were added to over the next two

centuries. Among many other things they prohibited Catholic priests from living in England (under penalty of death), attendance at Mass (punishable by a year in prison and a fine), a Papist teaching (the penalty being life imprisonment), Catholics voting or sitting in Parliament, and a Catholic from inheriting or purchasing land or willing property to their children. Edmund Burke deemed it: “A machine of wise and elaborate contrivance, and as well fitted for the oppression, impoverishment, and degradation of a people, and the debasement in them of human nature itself, as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man.”<sup>1</sup> These laws were unevenly enforced, and in certain periods affected dissenting Protestants more than they did Catholics, but if fully enforced they would no doubt have obliterated Catholicism in England completely. As it was, by the eighteenth century Catholics in England “felt themselves thoroughly subdued.”<sup>2</sup>

The first real easing of Catholic disabilities in the British Empire, and the first steps on the road towards Catholic Emancipation, happened in Grenada in 1768 when Catholics there were granted the franchise, and more significantly in Quebec in 1774. The Quebec Act re-introduced French civil law in that province, gave Catholics full political rights, granted them the full and free exercise of their religion, guaranteed the church tithe, and replaced the traditional oath of supremacy with one that did not involve renouncing Catholicism. It did not, however, establish the Roman Catholic Church, and instructions sent to Governor Carleton in 1775 prohibited priests from proselytizing Protestants or denouncing their religion in sermons.<sup>3</sup> The next step was the Papists Act (Savile Act) in

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in W. Carless Davis, “Catholic Emancipation,” Cambridge Modern History, Vol X (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907), 620. Burke was referring to the Irish Penal Code but it applies equally well to the English one.

<sup>2</sup> This phrase is borrowed from Sura 9:29 of the Qur’an and is quite intentionally used to encourage the reader to reflect on the similarities between the experience of Christian *dhimmis* under Islamic governments and the Catholic community under the Anglican ascendancy.

<sup>3</sup> See these instructions in John S. Moir, ed, Church and State in Canada 1627-1867 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967), 102.



1778, which allowed Catholics in England to own property, and limited the persecution of priests and Catholic teachers. Despite its innocuous nature it led to the Gordon Riots in London (1780) in which nearly 900 people were killed,<sup>4</sup> and riots in Scotland in 1779 which prevented any relief laws from being passed there until 1793. Acts which granted the Irish even more rights were passed in 1778 and 1782. The Savile Act was followed in England in 1791 by the Roman Catholic Relief Act (Mitford Act). It permitted Catholic worship and schools, did away with the recusancy laws, and opened certain legal and military positions to Catholics. The Mitford Act was applied to Scotland in 1793. In the same year Hobart's Act provided Irish Catholics who owned land worth over forty shillings with the right to vote. The universities and the professions were also made open to them. These were all precursors to the main bill for Catholic Emancipation in 1829, which provided Catholics with nearly full equality, though later bills (1838, 1844, 1846, 1871 and 1926) were also needed to clear away some minor remaining disabilities. Today Catholics effectively have full equality in the United Kingdom but are restricted from the Monarchy, the highest offices in the churches of England, Scotland and Ireland, and three other offices.

### The Penal Laws and Catholic Emancipation in British North America

The English Penal Laws were instituted in the New World and became firmly entrenched in the Thirteen Colonies.<sup>5</sup> Anglicanism became the established church in Virginia (settled 1607) and by 1642 no "popish recusants" could hold office, vote or even live in the colony. Puritan Massachusetts in 1647 banished all Jesuits and Catholics (under threat of execution if they returned), forbade the importation of Irish people, and required anyone taking an oath of office to denounce the Pope. Maryland, which had been granted

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<sup>4</sup> A eminently readable and scholarly account can be found in Hibbert.

<sup>5</sup> The classic overview of anti-Catholicism in the United States is Billington.

to the Catholic Lord Baltimore in 1632, granted religious toleration to all Christians and began life as a haven for Catholics. The Protestant majority, however, began to take control in 1654 and enacted a law denying protection to Roman Catholics, then in 1704 passed *An Act to Prevent the Growth of Popery*. In every colony, excepting only Rhode Island, Quaker Pennsylvania and Maryland in its first two decades, Catholics suffered under some form of penal laws, but even in the former two Catholics were forbidden from holding public office.

The Penal Laws in Newfoundland, while significant, were not as severe as those found in most of the Thirteen Colonies. This at first seems surprising because John Guy's settlement in 1610 was England's second one in the New World, but the English government preferred that Newfoundland remain simply as a fishing station and so tended to discourage permanent settlement there. The implementation of penal legislation was thus delayed over a century and reflected the more tolerant attitude then existing in the mother country. In the 1720s Newfoundland became the first place to receive large numbers of Irish emigrants. In response to this the mother country finally began to institute penal laws.<sup>6</sup> They forbade Catholic priests from living on the Island and in 1729 the Governor was instructed: "You are to permit a liberty of conscience to all persons, except Papists . . . ."<sup>7</sup> In 1755 the Governor instituted efforts to reduce the number of Irish in the Colony in the hopes of ensuring that all Irish fishermen went home for the winter and Irish women did not come to settle. Huge fines were placed on the saying of Mass, Catholics were forbidden from operating public houses, limits were placed on the number of Irish who could live in

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<sup>6</sup> Useful accounts of religious life in the first two centuries of Newfoundland's existence include Peter Pope, Fish into Wine. The Newfoundland Plantation in the Seventeenth Century (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), pp 288-96; and "Religious History of Newfoundland," in W. Stewart Wallace, ed, The Encyclopaedia of Canada. Newfoundland Supplement (Toronto: University Associates of Canada, 1949), web edition found at <http://faculty.marianopolis.edu/c.bclanger/nfldhistory/ReligiousHistoryNewfoundland.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Cited by Rollman 36. Dissenters, while given toleration, were still under many restrictions which were not completely lifted until about 1833.

one household, and edicts were promulgated against them owning property. Attempts were made to destroy Catholic chapels and in Conception Bay Catholics had their homes and stores burned for attending Mass. In 1784 all persons in Newfoundland, including Papists, learned they had been given: “Full liberty of conscience, and the free exercise of . . . religious worship.”<sup>8</sup> From that point until 1825 they lived under almost no disabilities. Dissenters arguably had even more, having been forbidden from performing marriages in 1817. In 1825 this changed when Catholics were refused representation on the newly formed Executive Council by the mother country and this, and other seeds of discord, would help ignite their sectarian wars in 1832.<sup>9</sup>

The Penal Laws in the three Maritime Colonies follow the same rule of thumb that the later a colony was established the less severe they were, both on paper and in enforcement.<sup>10</sup> In 1749 Halifax was founded as a Naval base, and settled by “foreign Protestants” as the first step in transforming Nova Scotia into a Protestant, English colony. Then in 1755 the Acadians were expelled as the second step in this process. The third step was to enact laws and regulations that promoted Protestantism and disabled Catholics. In 1757 popish recusants were specifically excluded, by a Minute of Council, from the right to vote. In 1758 the first elected Assembly passed *An Act for the Establishment of Religious Publick Worship in this Province, and for Suppressing of Popery*. It established the Anglican Church, but it also granted Dissenters “free liberty of conscience” in order to make Nova Scotia attractive to the Protestants of the Thirteen Colonies. Roman Catholics, meanwhile, were prohibited from owning land without special permission of the Crown and

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<sup>8</sup> Cited by Rollman 36.

<sup>9</sup> See Lahey.

<sup>10</sup> The information about Nova Scotia and New Brunswick is primarily drawn from the article by Garner. The Penal Laws were never really applied in Upper or Lower Canada due to the unique situation of the conquered people of Quebec being nearly all Catholic, in fact these colonies led the way in the British Empire in granting Catholics full civil and religious rights.

were forbidden from conveying it in any way to another Papist. Catholic priests were ordered to leave the Colony or face life imprisonment, and a £50 fine was set for those who sheltered and hid a priest. In 1766 another Act stated that: "If any popish recusant, papist . . . shall be so presumptuous as to set up any school within the province . . . [he shall] suffer three months imprisonment . . . and shall pay a fine to the King of ten pounds. . . ."<sup>11</sup> Acadian schoolmasters were expelled and Protestant ones brought in from England in an attempt "to Anglicize and Protestantize the Acadians as much as possible."<sup>12</sup> As in the United Kingdom at this time, however, these penal laws were not strictly enforced.

The Nova Scotian Assembly within twenty-five years of first beginning to pass these restrictive laws changed direction and became a leader in the English-speaking world in pursuing rights for Catholics. In 1781 middle class Irish Catholics who had resided in Halifax since 1749 petitioned the Lieutenant Governor for repeal of the anti-Catholic laws. In 1782 the Assembly passed a Relief Act which went beyond the Savile Act of 1778, but London disallowed it because of this fact. The following year they passed a modified version.<sup>13</sup> It repealed the penalties against priests and most restrictions on owning land (completely repealed in 1826), and granted Catholics freedom of worship. In 1789 they passed a franchise act granting Catholics the right to vote. In 1820 Cape Breton, which was predominantly Catholic, was re-united with Nova Scotia. The Executive Council decided that year to place no religious restrictions on candidates. In the next election a Catholic, Laurence Kavanagh, was elected in Cape Breton but could not take his seat in the House until 1823, when a resolution was passed by a 21-15 vote that allowed any Catholics who

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<sup>11</sup> Johnston 80.

<sup>12</sup> Jean Daigle, ed, Acadia of the Maritimes (Moncton, N.B.: Université de Moncton, 1995), 525.

<sup>13</sup> Relevant sections of all these Acts can be found in Moir, Church and State, 31-7.

were elected to take a seat without making the Declaration against Popery and Transubstantiation.<sup>14</sup> In 1827 a petition from the Catholics of Halifax called for the House to seek formal recognition from the Queen for this principle. The Assembly unanimously agreed to pass their Address on to the Queen but it was ignored until the granting of Emancipation in England. In 1830 Nova Scotia passed a Catholic relief act and in 1832 the first Catholic was elected to Council and the following year the second Catholic Assemblyman.

New Brunswick, after the influx of thousands of Loyalists, became a separate colony from Nova Scotia in 1784. As in Nova Scotia the first session of the House passed a bill establishing the Church of England and granting dissenters “liberty of conscience,” though their ministers were placed under the control of the governor. Catholics were permitted to vote in the first election in 1785 but the House subsequently declared this illegal, and even overturned the election of a Catholic Acadian in Westmorland. In 1786 a resolution of the House declared Catholic votes illegal because they were illegal in England, and by 1790 a bill was passed (assented to in 1795) confirming this. Bills in 1791 and 1795 to give Catholics the vote received serious hearings but were not passed. In 1810, with support of the increasing dissenter influence in the province, Catholics in New Brunswick attained the franchise, and P.E.I. remained the only colony in British North America where Catholics could not vote. Catholics in New Brunswick were not eligible to hold office, however, until 1830, and no Catholic was elected until 1846.

#### Political and Legal Foundations of Anti-Catholicism on P.E.I., 1763-1825

Prince Edward Island was separated from Nova Scotia and established as its own colony in 1769. Like the other British possessions in North America it was designed by the

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<sup>14</sup> See D. J. Rankin, “Laurence Kavanagh,” CCHA Report 8 (1940-1941): 51-76.

mother country to be a Protestant colony, but Catholics settled there with almost the same frequency as Protestants, and while for fifteen years they were technically denied religious freedom, in practice they always worshipped freely. The first Governor, Walter Patterson, arrived in 1770. The instructions he carried with him from the Colonial Office in London both established the Anglican Church and “permitted a liberty of conscience to all persons (except Papists) . . . .”<sup>15</sup> The prohibition against Catholic worship, however, seems to have been completely ignored, and in 1783 and 1785 the Island Legislature overturned it by passing enabling laws which made it permissible for Loyalists to practice the Papist, Quaker and Methodist faiths, in order to make settling on P.E.I. attractive to them.<sup>16</sup> Religious freedom was further affirmed for dissenting Protestants when *An Act for quieting the Minds of His Majesty’s Dissenting Protestant Subjects in the Island of Saint John* was unanimously passed on March 30, 1790. It confirmed their full “liberty of conscience,” allowed them to appoint their own ministers and build churches, and assured them that they did not have to pay the “tythe” to the Established Church.<sup>17</sup>

By the turn of the century Protestants were beginning to feel threatened by the growing Catholic community, which led to the House in 1801 unanimously agreeing to send the following petition to the Lieutenant Governor:

. . . Although we conceive that liberty of conscience ought to be fully allowed to all His Majesty’s subjects of this Island . . . yet that of late the encroachments made by the priests and their adherents, professing the religion of the Church of Rome, within this Island have become alarming, the attempts and endeavours to convert Protestants and their children to their faith, their public harangues . . . their Priests, in the habit of their Order, going in processions to funerals and festivals and other public occasions, the erecting crosses in different parts of the Island, particularly one near the side of a public road within the Royalty of Charlottetown, exhibited to the view of all

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<sup>15</sup> Cited in Warburton 460.

<sup>16</sup> According to Alan Rankin in Jones and Haslam, *Refuge*, 14 (he authored this part). I have not been able to track down the original bills.

<sup>17</sup> *Acts of the General Assembly of Prince Edward Island, 1774-1797* (Charlottetown: King’s Printer, 1817), 144-5. In 1798 the Island of Saint John was re-named Prince Edward Island.

passengers, and their zealous and unremitting labours to inculcate and prolongate the Romish persuasion, in prejudice to the Protestant religion as established by law, we consider to be matters dangerous and offensive to His Majesty's loyal subjects, the Protestant inhabitants of this Island, and therefore beg leave to request that Your Excellency will be pleased to take the same into your consideration and adopt such measures on the occasion as in your wisdom you shall think fit.<sup>18</sup>

They also requested that a committee be established to seek a Protestant missionary for the colony. This led to the legislature the following year making an attempt to shore up the Protestant ascendancy somewhat with the passing of *An Act for the better and more effectual Establishment of the Church of England in this Island*.<sup>19</sup> It asserted that while the liturgies of the Church of England "shall be deemed the fixed form of worship amongst us" still "Protestants dissenting from the Church of England, whether they be Calvinists, Lutherans, Quakers, or under what denomination soever, shall have the free Liberty of Conscience. . . ." In these re-affirmations it was seeking to strengthen both the position of the established church and the rights of Protestant dissenters, but at least it did not do so by revoking the religious rights which had already been conferred on the Catholics.

In regard to political rights for Catholics the Island legislature was not quite as libertarian as they were in relation to religion. On February 17, 1773, Governor Patterson wrote to Lord Dartmouth in England that the Island would be able to hold its first election in the summer but given the small number of freeholders and the uneven distribution of the population they would be "waiving all kinds of qualifications, except their being Protestants and residents."<sup>20</sup> On July 4, 1773, Islanders elected their first "Catholic free" Assembly.

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<sup>18</sup> Journal of His Majesty's Council in General Assembly, July 23, 1801.

<sup>19</sup> Acts of the General Assembly of Prince Edward Island, 1798-1814, 17-8. New Brunswick in 1786 passed an *Act for Preserving the Church of England* in order "to quell the rapid and spontaneous expansion of evangelicalism." Cited in Nancy Christie, "In These Times of Democratic Rage and Delusion": Popular Religion and the Challenge to the Established Order, 1760-1815," in Gaffield, 18.

<sup>20</sup> Cited by Andrew Macphail, "The History of Prince Edward Island," in Canada and Its Provinces, vol 13 (Toronto: Glasgow Brady & Co, 1914), 349.

Following the passing of the Quebec Act in 1774, at least three attempts were made over the next two decades to attain political rights for Catholics, all ultimately fruitless.<sup>21</sup> The most significant of these occurred in 1790 when a bill to allow Catholics the right to vote and hold office was actually debated in the legislature (paralleling what was happening about the same time in the other two Maritime Provinces - see above), but it was so contentious that it was withdrawn by its sponsor in order to allow the Members of the House to canvass their constituents.<sup>22</sup> It would be 35 more years before the question of Catholics receiving their political rights would be revived. In 1801 the legislature passed an act to regulate elections which required electors to be Protestant, but it was repealed, so a new election act with the same religious qualification was passed in 1806.<sup>23</sup> Garner postulates that the reason for the Island's reticence in granting Catholics the vote, as compared to its Maritime neighbours, was likely related to the facts that P.E.I. was nearly 50% Catholic and that the Council and Assembly were controlled by Proprietors and their agents. To give Catholics the vote, therefore, would not only threaten the Protestant ascendancy but encourage the escheat movement<sup>24</sup> as well, as most Catholics were tenants.<sup>25</sup>

In regard to other civil liberties Catholics on the Island were not subject to many legal restrictions and those that existed seem to have been rarely, if ever, enforced. In August of 1771 P.E.I. had its first grand jury, and because there were so few qualified

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<sup>21</sup> The first attempt was in 1776 ("Phillips Callbeck to John MacDonald," Easter 1776, PARO RG , 2664/26), the third in 1792 ("Glenaladale to Borrodale," 1792, in GBC, CDC. The complete letter can be found in Michael E. LaSalle, The Weaving of the Plaid [Hanford, CA: self-published, 2002], 209).

<sup>22</sup> Journals of the House of Assembly of Prince Edward Island (JHA), Mar 30-31, 1790 and Nov 11, 1790.

<sup>23</sup> Acts, 1798-1814, pp 6,24.

<sup>24</sup> Escheat was the process whereby the land given to proprietors would be returned to the Crown, and then re-allocated to the tenants who were working the land.

<sup>25</sup> Garner 210.



people the governor was forced to include several Catholics on it.<sup>26</sup> This is a good example of where the pressures of pioneer life forced the two sects to work together, even when it meant going against British laws. Legal rights began to be granted to Catholics on April 22, 1786, when the Legislature passed *An Act for quieting the Minds of, and establishing certain Priviledges to His Majesty's Subjects professing the Popish Religion*.<sup>27</sup> This gave Catholics who swore an oath of allegiance the right to own land on the Island, as Nova Scotia had done in 1783.

Relations between the governing class and Catholics in these early years were quite good. Catholic Edward Whelan commented: "For more than fifty years *before* Catholic emancipation, the administration of all public affairs was in the hands of Protestants, – Catholics knew their condition and submitted to it patiently . . . Protestants understood their powers and privileges, but exercised them with Christian forbearance and magnanimity."<sup>28</sup> Bishop MacEachern wrote in 1826: "Although we have no voice in the Legislature, we find no inconvenience from that preclusion. Government is kind to us, and does not disturb us in our religious duties."<sup>29</sup> These positive relations are perhaps best exemplified by the fact that the first three governors of the Island (1769-1813) had all been on good terms with the Catholic missionaries. Father MacMillan commented:

It is noteworthy of fact that prior to 1813 no Governor of Prince Edward Island took advantage of his high position to hamper the Catholic clergy in their work of saving souls. On the contrary, the relations between priests and governors were always of the kindest nature. . . . Governor Patterson was a warm personal friend of Father James [MacDonald], and frequently had the humble priest a guest at his table. General Fanning lived on terms of closest intimacy with Father MacEachern. . . .<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Bumsted, Land, Settlement, and Politics on Eighteenth-Century Prince Edward Island (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), 38.

<sup>27</sup> Acts, 1774-1797, pp 122-3.

<sup>28</sup> Examiner, Dec 15, 1862.

<sup>29</sup> Bishop MacEachern to Rev Angus MacDonald, Dec 12, 1826, as cited by Wade 28.

<sup>30</sup> MacMillan, 1721-1835, p 183. The same was true of Newfoundland's first three Bishops.

The third Governor, Des Barres, meanwhile openly supported the Acadians in their attempt to bring in a French priest. This briefly changed in 1813 with the arrival of P.E.I.'s most notorious Governor, Charles Douglass Smith, who removed two Catholics from the office of the Justice of the Peace for the offence of making the sign of the Cross. Shortly after arriving he also wrote MacEachern that: "I have to inform you that all marriages solemnized by you without first having obtained a license from . . . the Governor, will be notified as null and void. . . ."<sup>31</sup> Nova Scotia at this time had no such restrictions, and MacEachern did not cede an inch, and soon it became a dead issue. Father MacMillan deemed this as the first and last real conflict between church and state in this colony.

#### Catholic Emancipation on P.E.I., 1825-30

In 1825 the fifth Governor, John Ready, appointed Bishop MacEachern as Commissioner of Highways and gave him a yearly allowance of £50, and in 1829 appointed him a Justice of the Peace. Most importantly, encouraged by his kindness, Catholics made their first move towards emancipation. Two external factors also provided incentive, Daniel O'Connell's efforts at repeal in Ireland<sup>32</sup> and the election of a Catholic in Cape Breton, Lawrence Kavanagh, who took his seat in 1823.<sup>33</sup>

As noted above<sup>34</sup> there had been attempts previously on the Island to get Catholics the vote but the first real move towards it happened in 1825.<sup>35</sup> According to an

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<sup>31</sup> MacMillan, 1721-1835, p 184.

<sup>32</sup> Daniel O'Connell of Ireland was the main agitator for Catholic emancipation, beginning in the late-1700s. The Island's only weekly paper of the time, the Register, kept people well informed of what was happening in regard to emancipation in the home country, at least forty issues from 1824-9 making reference to it.

<sup>33</sup> See p 64.

<sup>34</sup> See p 68.

<sup>35</sup> The most thorough telling of the emancipation story can be found in MacMillan, 1721-1835, pp 234-44, 261, 268-9, 272-80 and Garner 205, 209-14. See also Duncan Campbell, History of Prince Edward Island (Charlottetown: Bremner Brothers, 1875), 73-7.

unsympathetic source<sup>36</sup> it was first discussed among members of the House sympathetic to the idea, but they felt a petition was required to make it happen (this, and other later developments, will show that the Members of the House were actually quite favourably disposed to the idea of Catholic emancipation). So a petition was hurriedly put together and submitted on October 12, 1825, from 900 Roman Catholic inhabitants of the Island: “Praying that this House would do its part towards removing all invidious and impolitic distinctions, on account of their religious belief, and place them on a similar footing with their Protestant fellow-subjects. . . .”<sup>37</sup> It was brought before a committee of the whole House on October 20, but because it was near the end of the Session they resolved to defer dealing with it until the next session. The only dissenting voice to this resolution was Dr Angus MacAulay of Belfast, P.E.I., who Father MacMillan regarded as “an uncompromising friend of the Catholic cause.”<sup>38</sup> He feared delay because the subject “might be bandied about out of doors, to the prejudice of the good wishes of a large majority of the members.”<sup>39</sup>

His fears proved to be well founded for the next year a prolonged and sometimes nasty debate on this issue occurred in the Register. The first salvo was delivered on January 31, 1826, by a writer using the pen name “John Knox.” He wrote in response to an article in the Halifax Free Press which suggested that P.E.I.’s legislators had rejected emancipation in October. He claimed that all the members of the House were in fact in favour of the petition’s principle “that religious opinion ought not to create civil disabilities.” On February 28 a second writer (“a disciple of John Knox”) accused him of being a Catholic in disguise and commented: “I cannot conceive it possible for any good to result from granting

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<sup>36</sup> Register, May 30, 1826, being the letter writer who dubbed himself “Protestant Catholic.”

<sup>37</sup> Register, October 27, 1825.

<sup>38</sup> MacMillan, 1721-1835, p 235.

<sup>39</sup> Register, Feb 21, 1826.

Catholics what they ask for; but I am perfectly sure that evil will follow if their claims be urged. I do not see what cause the Catholics have to be dissatisfied with the existing laws.” He said as far as he could tell Protestants and Catholics on the Island “are on good terms: They do not interfere with each other’s religious sentiments,” but if Catholics are given the vote “strife and animosity will be kindled where Catholics and Protestants dwell together.” He argued that the “spirit of the Roman Catholic religion is hostile to the genius of the British Constitution,” and concluded, “give the Catholics votes, and not a single member will be returned but such as shall be tools in the hands of the Catholics.”

The main part of the debate, however, began on February 21, 1826, and continued with weekly instalments until June 6, being the lead item in most every issue. In the opening editorial the Editor said the paper was willing to hear from both sides but would itself remain neutral. The initial instalment came from a Protestant going by the penname of “Protestant Catholic.” He wrote nine long letters against emancipation, and was the only writer other than “a disciple” above to take this position. He argued that Catholicism was dangerous to liberty and Protestant institutions, and as Catholics were growing in strength and numbers, this was an argument for even greater vigilance in refusing them the vote. He claimed Nova Scotia had fallen into a humiliating condition because they had shown too much favour to Catholics. He also denigrated the wealth and brainpower of the vast majority of Catholics on the Island, saying “their intelligence is the opinion of their priests.”<sup>40</sup> The defence for Emancipation was initiated on March 7 by a Protestant who dubbed himself “A Real Protestant.” He was joined the following week by an anonymous writer, on April 4 by “A Catholic” (who penned four letters), on May 16 by “A Liberal Protestant,” and on May 23 by “Peter Puff.” Duncan Campbell, a Protestant historian in 1875, said the letters got sidetracked into theology but fairly observed that where they

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

touched on the issue of emancipation the Protestant arguments against the Catholic claim were “completely demolished by the accomplished advocates of the Roman Catholic claim.”<sup>41</sup> The debate never surfaced again in Island papers.

On March 29, 1827, the Petition came before the House again. Ewen Cameron moved and MacAulay seconded that the right of voting be extended to Catholics. Where the discussion in the press had exhibited much heat, that in the House was quite tolerant and civil. The issue of concern was not really whether the House supported the idea but did it have the legal authority to overturn a British law. So a motion was put forward to seek the King’s permission to change the law, but it lost 8-6. The main motion to grant the Catholics the vote was then put and it resulted in a 7-7 tie, forcing the Speaker (John Stewart) to break the deadlock. Having voted for the first motion he felt obligated to vote against the second one, and so it lost. A third unsuccessful legislative attempt at Emancipation was made on April 25, 1828. This Act coupled the Catholic franchise with the raising of qualifications of voters, anticipating Wellington’s bills in the United Kingdom that granted emancipation but also took away the vote given to the forty shilling freeholders in Ireland in 1793. It lost 9-5.

On April 13, 1829, the Parliament of the United Kingdom passed the *Roman Catholic Relief Act*. It granted Catholics in the Empire the right to vote and hold office, and recommended that the colonies pass similar legislation. In accordance with this direction Governor Ready of P.E.I. gave assent to *An Act for the Relief of His Majesty’s Roman Catholic Subjects* on April 28, 1830. It received the full support of the House but encountered some opposition in the Legislative Council.<sup>42</sup> The Bill repealed all past Acts that imposed “civil or political disabilities on Catholics.” Catholics could now vote, run for

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<sup>41</sup> Campbell 74.

<sup>42</sup> See the Journal of His Majesty’s Council, Mar 4,5,18,24,25,26,30; Apr 3,6,28, 1829.

office (except those in Holy Orders), and hold all civil and military offices upon taking the same oath as found in the 1829 Act from the home country.<sup>43</sup> The oath stipulated that the Monarch must be Protestant, the Pope had no authority in civil affairs, and that they would not disturb or weaken the Protestant religion.<sup>44</sup>

The bill was well received and the Protestant majority immediately welcomed Catholics into the political system. This was manifested in the election of a priest to the Charlottetown School Board within the month, and in a provincial by-election on June 10 in which the Catholic nominee Donald McDonald was elected by acclamation, as the Protestants agreed not to run anyone against him. In the fall of 1830 there was an election. The Island's only paper of the day reveals no sectarian animosities surrounding it. Protestant Charles Binns, prior to the election, argued that the oath could be dispensed with as long as the candidates agreed not to ask for it.<sup>45</sup> His advice seems to have quickly become the practice on the Island as no one seems to have been asked to take an oath of any kind, in this election or any subsequent ones. The Protestant candidates spoke very positively of Catholic involvement in the election in their speeches at the hustings,<sup>46</sup> and the Catholics (especially in King's County) were greatly excited with their newly won right.<sup>47</sup> The local paper reported that "the election throughout was conducted in the most liberal and amicable manner . . . marked by the greatest harmony and good humor."<sup>48</sup> MacMillan said four Catholics were elected, all in Kings County. This is a much better record than in Nova Scotia, which elected only one Catholic in 1832, and New Brunswick, which did not

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<sup>43</sup> For details see the Royal Gazette, Mar 9,16,23, Apr 6, May 18, 1830. The latter has the complete bill.

<sup>44</sup> MacMillan, 1721-1835, pp 274-5, and E. R. Norman 132-3, have the full oath.

<sup>45</sup> Royal Gazette, Sept 14, 1830.

<sup>46</sup> Royal Gazette, Oct 5, 12, 1830.

<sup>47</sup> Royal Gazette, Oct 19, 1830.

<sup>48</sup> Royal Gazette, Oct 5, 1830.

elect a Catholic until 1846, but the Catholics in both of these places were a significantly smaller percentage of the population. On February 20, 1847, the House passed a “Bill for dispensing with the Oath of Abjuration at present required to be administered to persons of the Roman Catholic persuasion, on their acceptance of office.”<sup>49</sup> It received Royal Assent on April 22. “This marked the removal of the last legal disability under which Catholics had laboured. Now, Catholics had equal status under the law with Protestants.”<sup>50</sup>

The mass demonstrations in Ireland for Catholic emancipation helped politicize the Irish on the Island. This was a result of both the popularity of O’Connell among the settlers already there<sup>51</sup> and the arrival of an increasing number of Monaghan Irish who had been part of his movement in the homeland. With emancipation in 1830 these politicized Catholic Irishmen were not long in entering the Island’s political frays. They really started to get involved in the 1840s, land reform being the main issue. They were led by Irish Catholic Edward Whelan and Anglo-Irish James Warburton, and opposed by the Anglo-Irish establishment like the Longworths and Edward Palmer. As political parties began to take shape in the 1830s and 40s the Irish Catholics were strongly Reform / Liberal, and this affiliation was not broken until the 1870s, when the Conservatives were able to court their votes by advocating for separate schools.

The passing of the Emancipation Bill led to the end of the privileges of Anglican clergy in regard to performing marriages on the Island, as it did elsewhere in the Empire. In 1831 a Marriage Bill was passed that allowed the clergy of any sect to perform marriages according to their tradition.<sup>52</sup> It also opened the door to Catholics serving in high places, such that in 1854 P.E.I. welcomed its first Catholic governor, Dominick Daly. It probably

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<sup>49</sup> JHA, 1847.

<sup>50</sup> MacIntyre 72.

<sup>51</sup> See p 70, n 32.

<sup>52</sup> See report in the Royal Gazette, May 5, 1831.

also influenced the outcome of the debate over the issue of prayer in the Legislature in 1836, for without the necessity of accommodating the denominational differences in the House the strange anomaly of a British colony that did not commence its sessions with prayer would likely never have happened.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> See MacMillan, 1835-91, pp 6-7, for further details.



CHAPTER 3  
RELATIONS BETWEEN PROTESTANTS AND CATHOLICS  
OUTSIDE OF THE POLITICAL ARENA

1763-1847: A Time of Borrowed Peace

The Protestant movement in Europe from its inception had put the Catholic Church on the defensive, though the Jesuit led Counter-Reformation had allowed Catholicism to regain some of its territory and confidence. This defensiveness was even more pronounced in Britain where the Catholic Church really did not start becoming assertive until the 1830s. This defensive attitude “extended even to Prince Edward Island”<sup>1</sup> and seemed to be part and parcel of being a Catholic there until recent times. One former student of St Dunstan’s asserted there had long prevailed “a kind of siege mentality. We as Catholics, were surrounded by evil and conniving people who had secular and materialistic views.”<sup>2</sup>

MacDonald traced this attitude to several factors:

[It] was partly a legacy of the Reformation, which had thrown Catholicism permanently on the defensive. It was also a by-product of many professors’ training in Quebec seminaries, where religion went hand in hand with “la survivance.” In some measure, too, it was a purely Island inheritance from the open religious conflict of the [nineteenth] century.<sup>3</sup>

Yet MacDonald also noted that “a siege mentality prevailed on both sides,”<sup>4</sup> the fear of ‘papal aggression’ never being too far from the average Protestant’s heart. Father Wendell

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<sup>1</sup> E. MacDonald, SDU, 72.

<sup>2</sup> Cited by *ibid* 375.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*. He sees it as starting to lessen in the 1940s.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid* 72.

MacIntyre put it this way: “Whether they were of Roman Catholic or Protestant persuasion the people of Prince Edward Island seemed always to be on the defensive, and, often being on the defensive meant being on the offensive.”<sup>5</sup>

Still in the first eighty years of the Island’s post-settlement history there was not a lot of “offensive” behaviour exhibited by either group. MacIntyre speaks of the first half of the 1800s as a time “of borrowed peace and sometimes open conflict.”<sup>6</sup> This is a fairly accurate assessment of the period between the dividing up of the Lots and the Belfast Riot, though it probably errs in over-accentuating the “conflict” side, but Ian Ross Robertson’s assessment reflects the situation even more precisely:

Even between Protestant and Roman Catholic there does not seem to have been much outright hostility until the late 1850s, when it became profitable for one political party to exploit religious loyalties for its own purposes. Certainly there was nothing to compare with the regular, almost ritualised violence between Irish Roman Catholics and English Protestants which disfigured Newfoundland history between the 1830s and the 1860s.<sup>7</sup>

This lack of “hostility” is confirmed by the Island papers during this period.

Examination of about two-thirds of the Island papers from 1824-1847<sup>8</sup> demonstrates a very high interest among Islanders in regard to religious matters, both at home and abroad, but manifests very little tension between Protestants and Catholics on the Island. The only exceptions to this were in the impassioned debate surrounding Catholic emancipation in 1826,<sup>9</sup> and in the 1843 debate between a Catholic and a Bible Society representative centred around the distribution of Bibles and the source of spiritual

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<sup>5</sup> MacIntyre 71.

<sup>6</sup> MacIntyre 71.

<sup>7</sup> I.R. Robertson, “Highlanders,” 235-6. He also notes that “. . . over the years the land question generated far more violence than did ethnic and religious disputes” (240, n 57). For my difference with Robertson on the dating of the commencement of the open sectarian rift on the Island see p 170.

<sup>8</sup> Reports on this research, conducted both by my students and myself, can be found in “BColl” (see p 201, n 18).

<sup>9</sup> See p 72.

authority.<sup>10</sup> One Bible Society spokesman deemed the latter “an overwrought exhibition of bitter sectarian feeling.”<sup>11</sup> In the end it was decided to quit the debate because of not wanting “to disturb the harmony which at present exists among the professing Christians of this community.”<sup>12</sup> At the close of this debate (March 14) another equally long one began, but this time it was between an Anglican and a Methodist, illustrating that the sectarian divide on the Island prior to the Belfast Riot was as likely to be between different Protestant denominations as it was between Catholics and Protestants. This truth was amply manifested in the extensive coverage given by the local papers in 1828 to Daniel O’Connell’s agitation for Catholic emancipation. There were virtually no letters to the editor on this issue and no reports of any sectarian tension on the Island surrounding it, but there were a number of articles at this time directed against the Established Church in the Canadas over Clergy Reserves<sup>13</sup> and their privileged status in the University. So while there was occasionally open conflict between Protestants and Catholics in this period what is surprising is how little of it there was, though one should not thereby assume that the inherited religious tensions were ever too far below the surface.

### Clergy Relations

The relative harmony of the time is perhaps best exemplified in the positive relations evident among the pioneer clergy of all denominations. An early example of kindly relations is found in the diary of William Drummond, a Presbyterian Minister who visited P.E.I. in 1770-1. While anchored off Princetown in the Malpeque area he wrote in his June 4 journal entry:

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<sup>10</sup> Royal Gazette, Mar 7, 1843.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, Feb 14, 1843.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid Mar 7, 1843.

<sup>13</sup> For more detail see p 93.

[We] went ashore where we saw a great number of French people who were very kind. . . . At 9 went to another house where the French were convened, had a dance and spent the evening in jollity.<sup>14</sup>

Drummond was almost certainly the same Presbyterian Clergyman who wrote to Bishop George Hay in Scotland in the fall of 1770 begging that he send a Catholic priest to minister among “the poor French Catholics there,” about 50 Acadian families.<sup>15</sup>

Anglican Theophilus Desbrisay ministered about 40 years on the Island and was “beloved and venerated by all who knew him.”<sup>16</sup> He was on good terms with people of all sects. This included Dr James MacGregor (the father of Presbyterianism in Nova Scotia), who often preached in his pulpit;<sup>17</sup> Methodists Benjamin Chappell (to whom he gave a Bible, not a small matter in those days), William Bulpitt (who reported that he was permitted to preach in Desbrisay’s church and that he was a great friend to him<sup>18</sup>), and William Black (the “father of Maritime Methodism”<sup>19</sup>); and Fathers Angus MacEachern and James MacDonald (1772-85). Rev Daniel MacDonald in 1881 spoke effusively of this latter relationship: “Indeed, when I think of the genuine warm feelings and brotherly love that mutually existed between my great grand-uncle (Father James) and the young parson my

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<sup>14</sup> David Weale, ed, “Diary of William Drummond,” Island Magazine 2 (Spring/Summer 1977): 30.

<sup>15</sup> See J.F.S. Gordon, The Catholic Church in Scotland, 1603-1869. Journal and Appendix to Scotichronicon and Manasticon, Vol 1 (Glasgow: John Tweed, 1869), 80.

<sup>16</sup> John M’Gregor, British America, two vols (London: T. Cadell, 1832), vol 1, 347.

<sup>17</sup> Rev John MacLeod, History of Presbyterianism on Prince Edward Island (Chicago: Winona Publishing Co, 1904), 20. For a full account of their first encounter see James Robertson, History of the Mission of the Secession Church to Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island from its Commencement in 1765 (London: J. Johnstone, 1847) 132-3.

<sup>18</sup> William Bulpitt to Mr Smith, n.d. located in United Church Archives, Wesleyan Methodist Church (Great Britain), Foreign Missions, Box 1, file 16. Cited by Terence Murphy, ed, A Concise History of Christianity in Canada (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1996), 124.

<sup>19</sup> T. Watson Smith, History of the Methodist Church of Eastern British America (Halifax: Methodist Book Room, 1877), vol 1, 302-4.

heart warms at the name of Desbrisay.”<sup>20</sup> Desbrisay had been reared a Presbyterian and when no Presbyterian clergyman was available many of that sect came to Charlottetown to have him baptize their children, and he would do this after the Presbyterian manner.<sup>21</sup> Desbrisay also baptized Catholics in the Covehead area.<sup>22</sup> MacGregor said of Desbrisay: “His kindness ended not -- but with his life.”<sup>23</sup>

Dr MacGregor was of the same open spirit as Desbrisay. An early account says of him that: “He had none of the bigotry of sectarians; he mixed cheerfully with all men; . . . never attempted to promulgate religious dissensions, nor ever to wound the feelings of any on account of their differences of creed.”<sup>24</sup> In his autobiography he says that on his pastoral circuits: “I resolved not to confine my visitations to Presbyterians, but to include all, of every denomination, who would make me welcome; for I viewed them all as sheep without a shepherd.”<sup>25</sup> When a large group of Catholics from the Hebrides arrived in Pictou late in the fall of 1791 he instructed his congregation to house and feed them, and they showed them great hospitality. He also gave to many of them an axe and a hoe and “they came to regard him with great veneration.”<sup>26</sup>

Aeneas (Angus) Bernard MacEachern was the Island’s first Bishop and is its most venerated priest, serving from 1790-1835. His story is told elsewhere<sup>27</sup> and I will focus on

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<sup>20</sup> Daniel MacDonald, “A Chapter in our Island History,” a lecture in Charlottetown, Jan 27, 1881, available at <http://www.islandregister.com/mcd.html>.

<sup>21</sup> MacLeod 20.

<sup>22</sup> MacLeod 57.

<sup>23</sup> George Patterson, Memoir of the Rev James MacGregor (Philadelphia: Joseph M. Wilson, 1859), 211.

<sup>24</sup> J. M’Gregor, British America, vol 2, 133.

<sup>25</sup> Dr MacGregor’s diary in J. Robertson 101.

<sup>26</sup> Patterson 256-61.

<sup>27</sup> Francis W.P. Bolger, “The First Bishop,” in Hennessy, 22-57; Allan MacDonald, “Angus Bernard MacEachern, 1759-1835: His Ministry in the Maritime Provinces,” in Murphy and Byrne, 53-67.

it here only in relation to his contact with Protestants. Perhaps one of the most frequent themes in Island histories when discussing Father MacEachern is that he was “a man respected and revered by all irrespective of creed or nationality.”<sup>28</sup> The earliest reference to this comes from near the end of his life in 1832: “The Right Reverend Aneas M’Eacharen, titular Bishop of Rosen, an excellent and venerable character, equally esteemed by the members of every religious profession in the colony.”<sup>29</sup> Ian Ross Robertson credited much of the relatively positive relations between Catholics and Protestants on P.E.I. in these pioneer years to the priest: “The surprising circumstance [then] was the dearth of religious hostility, and much of this was due to the personality of Angus B. MacEachern . . . .”<sup>30</sup> A second equally strong tradition is that he performed religious services for both Catholics and Protestants. Father MacDonald in 1865 affirmed that “he buried, and christened, and married Protestants who solicited his services, as well as Catholics,”<sup>31</sup> and Duncan Campbell noted in 1875 that: “Everywhere he was welcomed, both by catholic and protestant. There are yet living protestants who received the waters of baptism from the hands of the good bishop.”<sup>32</sup>

MacEachern was known and respected by all, political leaders,<sup>33</sup> clergy and laity alike. The Bishop of Quebec in 1812 said there was “not a family Catholic or Protestant,

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<sup>28</sup> J.D. Stewart, “Old Charlottetown” in Mary Brehaut, Historic Highlights of Prince Edward Island (Charlottetown: Historical Society of Prince Edward Island, nd.), 12. See also Carrie Ellen Holman, Our Island Story, 2nd Edition (no publishing information, 1948), 79-81, and Warburton 20.

<sup>29</sup> J. M’Gregor, British America, vol 1, 306. See also John Lawson, Letters on Prince Edward Island (Charlottetown: George T. Haszard, 1851), 36.

<sup>30</sup> I.R. Robertson, “Religion” 38.

<sup>31</sup> Examiner, Aug 7, 1865.

<sup>32</sup> Campbell 189. Cf Nathaniel MacLaren, “Memorial Address,” in MacKinnon and Warburton, 353a.

<sup>33</sup> See p 69.

French or Scotch, whose good and bad qualities have escaped his notice.”<sup>34</sup> His reputed kindnesses extended to a generous hospitality towards his Protestant neighbours. In 1823 he gave shelter to two females of Baptist leanings who were travelling on foot from Kingsboro to Crossroads (close to a hundred kilometres) to secure the services of Scotch Baptist preacher Alexander Crawford. They encountered severe storms and the Bishop housed them for a night in his home. When they returned with Crawford they were the first two adults immersed in that area.<sup>35</sup> Roddie Pratt, a Protestant from St Peter’s, recounted a tradition about his great-great grandmother. She was a Nicholson, newly arrived from Skye in 1810, and at nine years old had developed a cancerous tumour on her tongue. Although the family was Protestant they took her to Father MacEachern who was reputed to have a miraculous cure for this fatal malady.<sup>36</sup> She stayed with the Bishop and his sister for at least six weeks as he successfully cured it with a special poultice he had prepared. She lived to eighty and had nine children. When the father returned for his child she had grown so attached to the Bishop and his sister, and they to her, that she did not want to leave.<sup>37</sup>

“A warm friendship also existed between Doctor Jenkins and Father Fitzgerald . . . ,”<sup>38</sup> the former an Anglican clergyman and the latter the priest for Charlottetown from 1823-9. Fitzgerald, according to Father Burke writing in the mid-1880s, “Was remarkably friendly with Protestants of all denominations and often received very substantial proof of their regard in the shape of subscriptions towards any

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<sup>34</sup> Cited by MacMillan, 1721-1835, p 156, original source not given.

<sup>35</sup> Rev Ross Howard, “The Baptists of P.E.I.,” Abegweit Review, Fall 1994 - Spring 1995, 117-8.

<sup>36</sup> MacEachern claimed in 1815 to have healed three people with his poultice (MacMillan, 1721-1835, p 182).

<sup>37</sup> The complete version of this story can be found in Juanita Rossiter, Gone to the Bay. A History of the St Peter’s Fire District Area (no publisher, [2000]), 244.

<sup>38</sup> P. Pope, 264.

parochial enterprise he might have on hand.”<sup>39</sup> He was one of the founding members of the Benevolent Irish Society along with some of Charlottetown’s leading Irish Protestants. Peter McCourt reported in 1906 that: “We have learned from our older citizens, Protestant and Catholic, that general regret was felt at his departure.”<sup>40</sup>

In fact all the clergy in the early years seem to have got along quite admirably. This was true as well throughout the Maritimes, partly due to the need to co-operate in the challenging pioneer years, partly because it was prior to ultramontanistism, and “partly because the Anglican establishment, which was more nominal than real, excited little jealousy or resentment.”<sup>41</sup>

One should not deduce from this, however, that the religious rivalry for souls was dead in this period. In 1806 John Stewart wrote: “Most of the Highlanders who settled in the Island previous to 1803, and the Acadian French, are Roman Catholics, and have two or three priests of that religion, whose reputed zeal for making proselytes has occasionally created some differences; I believe however their success in that respect has not been great, though the want of Protestant Clergymen has given them advantages over weak minds.”<sup>42</sup> This rivalry is quite evident in the work of the two greatest clergymen in the Maritimes, whose good friendship, we will see, did not preclude ‘sheep stealing.’

When Dr MacGregor’s Presbyterian flock in Pictou opened their homes in 1791 to

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<sup>39</sup> The Burke Chronicles, 61.

<sup>40</sup> Peter McCourt, “The Benevolent Irish Society,” in MacKinnon and Warburton, 243.

<sup>41</sup> Terence Murphy, “The Emergence of Maritime Catholicism, 1781-1830,” Acadiensis 13 (Spring 1984): 30. Presbyterian James Robertson in 1847 noted that the established church in Nova Scotia “possesses no powers which render it an object of jealousy to other denominations” (J. Robertson 279), even though this was not the case in the early-1800s when 11 of the 12 members of the ruling Council of Twelve were Anglicans, including the Bishop.

<sup>42</sup> John Stewart, An Account of Prince Edward Island in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, North America (London: W. Winchester and Son, 1806. Reprint, New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967), 289.



the Scottish Catholic immigrants<sup>43</sup> they began attending the Presbyterian Church, as there was no Catholic Church. MacGregor reported:

There was a fair prospect that numbers of them would become Protestant presbyterians; but priest M'Eachern in Prince Edward Island . . . paid them a visit, told them of the danger of living among Protestants, advised them to leave Pictou, to go eastward along the Gulf Shore to Cape Breton, where Protestants would not trouble them, and threatened them with excommunication if they would come to hear my preaching. A good number of them obeyed him instantly, and the rest by degrees, except a very few who embraced my gospel.<sup>44</sup>

Altogether four of these Catholics converted. MacEachern's letter to Father Jones of Halifax in 1791 in which he reported that "two or three have been perverted" by a "fanatical" seceder in Merigomiche, Nova Scotia,<sup>45</sup> seems to be referring to this same incident. One of the converts was the wife of a Protestant who had "a genuine conversion" but was also after that, according to MacGregor, "a complete bigot to Popery."<sup>46</sup>

The sheep also moved in the other direction. Dr MacGregor recounted the story of losing a Presbyterian to MacEachern. On his first visit to Princetown in 1791 he baptized scores of children but his concern was always whether the parents would raise the child in the faith: "I rejected only one man, who absolutely refused to keep up the worship of God in his family, and he went and got his child baptized by a Popish priest."<sup>47</sup> In that same year MacEachern noted in a letter that "Catholics and Protestants were so intermixed," and by 1793 reported that he had received some converts.<sup>48</sup> In 1830 he reported: "We live on the best terms with our Protestant neighbours. . . . They do not diminish our numbers, and we

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<sup>43</sup> See p 81.

<sup>44</sup> Dr MacGregor's diary in J. Robertson 148.

<sup>45</sup> Cited by Rev John C. MacMillan, The History of the Catholic Church on Prince Edward Island From 1835 Till 1891 (Quebec: L'Evenement, 1913), p 92, original source not given.

<sup>46</sup> Dr MacGregor's diary in J. Robertson 150.

<sup>47</sup> Dr MacGregor's diary in J. Robertson 138.

<sup>48</sup> "MacEachern to Hubert," Aug 28, 1791, AAQ, IPE, I, #1, and "MacEachern to Hubert," May 1, 1793, AAQ, IPE, I, #7. Cited by A. MacDonald, "MacEachern," 63, 93.

acquire some additions.”<sup>49</sup> This intermixing of evangelistic success and testimonials of good relations with those on the other side in these reports, provides a nice illustration of the interaction between the two faith groups in the pioneer period.

### Lay Relations

The lay people in this period, as with their clergy, also got along fairly well. Several politicians in the debates following the Belfast Riot in 1847 noted that prior to it religious differences had been “unknown among us,”<sup>50</sup> and the testimony of others confirm this. Bishop MacEachern wrote in 1830 that “we have no religious disputes in these countries, where there are as many creeds as can be found in the *Dictionnaire des Hérésies*.”<sup>51</sup> John MacGregor in his 1832 history listed all the denominations on the Island and then commented that “all the members of these professions associate together as neighbours, and frequently attend the places of worship of each other, with great good feeling.”<sup>52</sup>

Travelogue writer S. S. Hill made the same point in 1839:

To the credit of the settlers in general, it may be added, that great good will subsists between those of the most adverse creeds. The Clergy . . . [are] well disposed to encourage those feelings . . . A Christian in practice, is never asked to what church or sect he belongs. . . . Such is at least the feeling and the practice of a large majority of the people . . . .<sup>53</sup>

Even William Douse, who would soon gain much notoriety for the central role he would play in inciting the Belfast Riots,<sup>54</sup> said in 1845 that he deemed P.E.I. to be the most

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<sup>49</sup> MacEachern to Angus Macdonald, Oct 14, 1830, ASCR. Cited by A. MacDonald, “MacEachern,” 63. Wade on pp 17-23, 29 has a discussion of conversions in the Maritime Provinces in the pioneer years.

<sup>50</sup> See p 170.

<sup>51</sup> MacEachern to Angus Macdonald, Aug 10, 1830, ASC XII, as cited by Wade 30.

<sup>52</sup> J. M’Gregor, British America, vol 1, 346.

<sup>53</sup> S. S. Hill, A Short Account of Prince Edward Island (London: Madden, 1839), 55-6.

<sup>54</sup> See pp 124ff for more on Douse.

“peaceful colony” in the world in regard to religious feeling.<sup>55</sup>

These friendly feelings are evident in the sharing of church buildings and in supporting each other in their building projects. The first Protestant church building on the Island was St Paul’s Anglican in Charlottetown. It was specifically designed for the established churches of both England and Scotland, who used it alternately, but according to John Morris (in 1819) it “was open to all.”<sup>56</sup> The Presbyterian MacGregor preached there regularly as did the Methodist Bulpitt and its use was offered to the Catholics. The offer to the Catholics manifests both the openness on the Island and the damage caused by the old world attitudes:

[Father De Calonne’s] Protestant friends kindly offered him the use of their [newly built] church . . . and he was disposed to profit by their generosity, but the Bishop . . . wrote to him saying: You must not make use of Protestant churches for divine service . . . [it] might result in unpleasant consequences. It would be better to select for the purpose any other place. . . .<sup>57</sup>

The deep sectarian spirit displayed in the final remark is most fully realized when one recognizes that at the time the Catholics were meeting in the priest’s house, which was too small to accommodate them all, and the Anglicans had previously been meeting in various houses and sometimes a tavern. One of the contributors to this Anglican building was the Island’s most prominent Catholic, John MacDonald of Tracadie.<sup>58</sup> There were also many occasions in which Protestants contributed to Catholic building projects, including two instances during Governor Ready’s term when he and people of all denominations met in St Dunstan’s Church to make donations.<sup>59</sup> On two other occasions the donations were of land

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<sup>55</sup> Islander, Apr 12, 1845. For another example see Benjamin Bremner, Tales of Abegweit (Charlottetown: Irwin, 1936), 48.

<sup>56</sup> Cited in Benjamin Bremner, An Island Scrap Book (Charlottetown: Irwin, 1932), 97.

<sup>57</sup> Cited by MacMillan, 1721-1835, p 114.

<sup>58</sup> R.C. MacDonald, Sketches of Highlanders (Saint John: Henry Chubb, 1843), 45. John MacDonald’s oldest son Donald married Matilda Anne Breacken, an English Protestant.

<sup>59</sup> Register, Mar 17, 1825, and the Royal Gazette, Dec 20, 1831.

for a “Papist Church.”<sup>60</sup>

The positive feelings were also manifested in the religious co-operation in community organizations. The Benevolent Irish Society was formed mostly by Irish Protestants as a nonsectarian charitable society in 1825. It provided relief to people of all creeds and races. Their first meeting was held in the Catholic Chapel and its inaugural annual dinner toasted both the local Protestant and Catholic clergymen. In its formative years the executive was made up of both prominent Catholic and Protestant Irishmen. By the late-nineteenth century, however, it was solidly Irish Catholic.<sup>61</sup> During the Potato Famine *ad hoc* groups were formed by both Catholics and Protestants to support the needy in Ireland and Scotland. The temperance cause occasionally brought the Protestant and Catholic churches together as well, a prominent example occurring in 1845 when the Protestant Independent Total Abstinence Society helped to raise money “to get abstinence leader Father Mathew out of debtor’s prison.”<sup>62</sup> This is not unlike the inter-denominational unity displayed in the pro-life movement in North America today.<sup>63</sup> Nearly all of these ecumenical efforts came to an end after the Bible Question arose in 1856, those around the land question being the prime exception.

When it came to getting the land back from the absentee landlords there was neither

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<sup>60</sup> The Burke Chronicles 156. See also Marilyn Bell, ed., “Mr. Mann’s Island. The Journal of an Absentee Proprietor 1840,” Island Magazine 33 (Spring/Summer 1993): 24; and MacMillan, 1721-1835, p 165.

<sup>61</sup> See McCourt, 241-4 and O’Grady 177-9.

<sup>62</sup> MacMillan, 1835-91, p 89. For a later example see the Examiner July 25, 1864. Father Theobald Mathew began a hugely successful abstinence movement in Ireland in 1838, and also preached his temperance gospel to the Irish immigrants in North America. A summary of his career and impact on the Island’s Temperance Movement can be found in O’Grady (235-6).

<sup>63</sup> An interesting effort in early ecumenicism also occurred around Thomas Irwin’s noble attempt to learn and help maintain the Mi’kmaq language. This rather complex story is recounted in detail in L.F.S. Upton, “Thomas Irwin: Champion of the Micmacs,” Island Magazine 3 (Fall/Winter 1977): 13-16.

Catholic nor Protestant, only Island tenant farmers.<sup>64</sup> In 1843-44 Daniel O'Connell was peacefully advocating Irish self-government under the British monarchy but had been arrested. When the report arrived in Charlottetown that O'Connell was released from prison there was a huge celebration in Charlottetown, of which the Catholic Palladium on October 8, 1844, reported: "We rejoiced to observe our Protestant Brethren and natives of different soils from our own, felt disposed on that occasion, to bury their national and religious prejudices, and join in the noble revelry of celebrating the liberation of O'Connell." Also in New London Scots Presbyterians powerfully added their voice in support of repeal, heaping plaudits on Daniel O'Connell, claiming it was a non-sectarian cause and supporting it with their pocketbooks.<sup>65</sup> This unity was even more impressively displayed in the midst of the Island's most sectarian years. The Tenant League was formed in December 1863. To achieve its goal of land reform it practised civil disobedience through refusing to pay rents. Among other examples of unity there was a large march in Charlottetown on St Patrick's Day, 1865, which included both Catholics and members of the Orange Order. The League exhorted that "Scotchmen, Englishmen, Irishmen and Frenchmen be one on this question."<sup>66</sup>

In 1862 Edward Whelan spoke of the "cordial and generous feeling" which characterized "the intercourse between Protestants of all denominations and their Catholic neighbours [before 1856]. They trafficked with each other – they went to fairs, frolics, feasts and funerals together – they courted and intermarried – the 'Papist' girl never objecting to her 'heretic' sweetheart – provided he was loving and loveable."<sup>67</sup> His point in

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<sup>64</sup> The Examiner of Oct 19, 1850, interestingly reports on the same phenomenon in Ireland when it re-prints a report of the largest gathering of Catholics and Protestants in Irish history in order to protest the lack of tenant rights.

<sup>65</sup> Colonial Herald, Aug 26, 1843.

<sup>66</sup> Cited by Peter McGuigan, "Tenants and Troopers. The Hazel Grove Road, 1865-68," Island Magazine 32 (Fall/Winter 1992): 22.

<sup>67</sup> Examiner, Dec 15, 1862.

regard to marriage was no doubt an over-statement, though it might have been more of a reality among the Island's Scots.<sup>68</sup> While this period witnessed relatively good relations between Catholics and Protestants there was very little intermarriage. Certainly the Acadians rarely intermarried<sup>69</sup> and neither did the Irish. From 1832-72 there were 616 marriages of Irish parishioners in Charlottetown. Only 10% were of mixed nationalities, only four people married a convert to the Catholic faith, and there was only one interfaith marriage.<sup>70</sup> His point respecting friendship, however, does appear to be much closer to the mark. While Whelan no doubt over-estimated the inter-faith "trafficking" because it was in his political interest as a Liberal leader to do so, in order to be able to accuse the Conservatives of stirring up religious strife for cheap political advantage; still the sum of the evidence does indicate that relatively friendly relations did prevail among the Island's Christian denominations prior to the Belfast Riot in 1847. While there were some examples of religious / ethnic discrimination during this period (especially against the Acadian community), and some public disputes around the issues of Catholic emancipation and the place of the Bible in the schools, these intermittent squabbles are not enough to undermine the assessment of the writers noted above that all denominations lived together in relative harmony.

#### Comparison to Other Canadian Colonies

Murphy notes that this pattern during the pioneer period was consistent throughout the Atlantic Provinces, that anti-Catholicism and bigotry existed but so did "harmony and co-operation." He said Protestants were making so many contributions to Catholic building causes "that Bishop Plessis anxiously ordered a stop to it for fear that Catholics would later

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<sup>68</sup> See p 87, n 58.

<sup>69</sup> See p 44.

<sup>70</sup> O'Grady 188-9, 276,7.

be expected to reciprocate.”<sup>71</sup> Many testimonials from the time support his claim, of which I will cite but one for each region. Governor Gower in 1804 believed of Newfoundland that “there is perhaps a greater cordiality subsisting between the Protestant and Romish communities there than is found in any other situation”<sup>72</sup> In 1828 John MacGregor reported that in Nova Scotia, “Religious or fanatical animosities never interfere with the peace of society; nor is the neighbourly kindness so general among the inhabitants ever disturbed by spiritual discord.”<sup>73</sup> Four years later he noted a change, with “violent animosities” having occurred the past few years in Pictou, but this was not a Protestant-Catholic clash but between members of the Kirk and their Presbyterian brothers, the Anti-Burghers.<sup>74</sup> R.C. MacDonald in 1843 affirmed Catholics and Protestants also got along very well in Cape Breton.<sup>75</sup> Alexander Monro as late as 1855 reported the same “amity” for Nova Scotia<sup>76</sup> and New Brunswick,<sup>77</sup> but he must have been wearing the proverbial rose coloured glasses when writing this of the latter considering the violence in that province during the 1840s, though it was true prior to that time.<sup>78</sup>

This pattern of co-operation is not uncommon among settlers. When the Muslims first started to arrive in Toronto in the 1950s and early-1960s the different ethnic groups (Turks, Albanians, Pakistanis, Trinidadians, etc) and Shia and Sunni sects all worshipped

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<sup>71</sup> Murphy, “Emergence,” 44.

<sup>72</sup> PRO, CO 194/45, fols. 20-38, “Explanatory Observations on Return for 1804,” cited by Lahey 50. See also M. F. Howley, Ecclesiastical History of Newfoundland (Boston: Doyle and Whittle, 1888), 226.

<sup>73</sup> John MacGregor, Sketches, 130.

<sup>74</sup> J. M’Gregor, British America, vol 2, 133-4.

<sup>75</sup> R.C. MacDonald 52.

<sup>76</sup> Alexander Monro, New Brunswick, with a Brief Outline of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island (Halifax: Richard Nugent, 1855), 320. By the next year this would all change in Nova Scotia (see p 112ff).

<sup>77</sup> Ibid 258.

<sup>78</sup> See pp 108-109.

together. It was not until they achieved more sizeable numbers and became better established that they separated off into their various mosques, divided not only by sect but frequently by the dominant ethnic group as well.<sup>79</sup>

When sectarian disputes arose during this period they were at least as often between competing Protestant groups as they were between Protestants and Catholics. The most serious sectarian conflicts in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia occurred around the issue of Anglican dominated education institutions, but this mainly affected Dissenters. Publicly-endowed King's College (founded 1788) in Windsor, Nova Scotia, had a by-law in the late-1700s which read: "No member of the University shall frequent the Romish mass, or the meeting houses of Presbyterians, Baptists, or Methodists, or . . . of any other Dissenters from the Church of England."<sup>80</sup> The Presbyterians in Pictou sought, therefore, to establish their own seminary in 1816, named Pictou Academy. From 1825-30 the Assembly seven times passed supply bills for the Academy, which the Council in turn rejected, until it finally began to receive annual grants in 1831. The main reason for this was that the Anglican Bishop was a member of the Council and was intent on protecting King's College.<sup>81</sup> The main conflict between Catholics and Anglicans in Nova Scotia was over Father Edmund Burke's attempt to establish a Catholic college (later St Mary's) beginning in 1802. It led to a pamphlet war which also drew in the Presbyterian and Pictou Academy headmaster, the Rev Thomas McCulloch, with his tract *Popery Condemned*.<sup>82</sup> The exclusive right given to the Anglican clergy to perform marriages also caused problems for both Catholics and

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<sup>79</sup> This is based on interviews I conducted with many Muslim leaders in Toronto in 1985.

<sup>80</sup> Cited, with stunned disapproval, in the Register, April 7, 1829.

<sup>81</sup> See J. Robertson 217-33. More recent research argues that the conflict between McCulloch and the Kirkmen may have played the major role in this. See Phillip Buckner and John Reid, eds, The Atlantic Region to Confederation: A History (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 266.

<sup>82</sup> Murphy, "Emergence," 42-3.



Dissenters. In Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Baptist preachers were even imprisoned for performing marriages.<sup>83</sup>

In Ontario there were three major religious groupings, the established Anglicans and Presbyterians, the evangelical Baptists and Methodists, and the Catholics. The Established Churches often viewed the evangelical communities as a threat to the order of both church and state, and the main sectarian disputes, prior to the arrival of the Irish famine victims in the late-1840s, were mostly between these two groupings. This was well illustrated in the public debate in 1825-6 between the Anglican Bishop John Strachan and the Methodist Egerton Ryerson.<sup>84</sup> That is not to claim, however, that the Protestants were thereby positively disposed towards the Catholics. Ryerson, for example, quoted approvingly an Anglican book of sermons that branded Rome as the “harlot, the most filthy of all harlots, the greatest that has ever been.”<sup>85</sup> Still the biggest issue was that of the Clergy Reserves, which concerned what Protestant denomination(s) should benefit from the land (1/7th of all the waste lands) that had been set apart for “the maintenance of a Protestant Clergy” in the 1791 Constitution Act. This led to much debate in political circles and among the various Protestant sects for about thirty years until it was finally resolved in 1854. Conflicts were also evident within the Catholic Church, in the rivalry for control between Scottish, Irish and French clergy, and in the Trustee issue between clergy and laity as to who was in control of the temporal and even spiritual affairs of the congregation.<sup>86</sup>

The years from 1782-1832 were relatively free of sectarian strife not only in Canada but also in Britain and the U.S.A. American Catholics received the franchise following the

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<sup>83</sup> Christie 41.

<sup>84</sup> William Westfall, “Order and Experience: The Religious and Cultural Roots of Protestant Ontario,” in Gaffield, 442ff.

<sup>85</sup> Cited in *ibid* 442.

<sup>86</sup> See Billington 38-41, 295-300, for how the Trustee issue played itself out in the United States in a much more controversial fashion.

Revolution and rights for Catholics in British North America continued to expand during this time. The Gordon Riots of 1780 in London ignited a determination there to ensure that something like that never happened again, and helped moderate the anti-Catholic spirit that had become quite virulent in Britain after the passing of the Savile Act in 1778. While there were many petitions and heated debates in the United Kingdom prior to the Emancipation Act in 1829, the real backlash and fear of the Catholic revival did not hit Protestants in England until the latter half of the 1830s.<sup>87</sup>

During this period Catholics were still just trying to get along as best as they could with their Protestant neighbours. They had adopted many Protestant forms of worship, such as singing English hymns and reciting prayers in English rather than Latin, and intermarriage and friendship were common.<sup>88</sup> While ultramontanist was starting to grow in England the spirit of Father Peter Baines (Vicar-Apostolic from 1829-50) was still dominant, a spirit of charity and of not giving “unnecessary offence” to one’s Protestant neighbour.<sup>89</sup> It was a time when the Catholic Church in England was just starting to rise up from the nadir to which it had plummeted in the 1780s; but it was still far from the confident, aggressive ultramontane Church that would begin to take root there about 1835, with the arrival of Nicholas Wiseman (Cardinal from 1850-65), and be brought into full bloom under the leadership of Henry Manning (who became Cardinal in 1875).

This is the same era in which Angus MacEachern was the leader of the Catholic Church on P.E.I., and he exhibited the same non-aggressive Catholicism, manifested in the fact that he did not appear in clerical dress publicly until the Bishop of Quebec ordered him to in 1812. This followed the custom in Scotland where, due to persecution, one tried not to attract the attention of the authorities. MacEachern had been free to exercise his

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<sup>87</sup> Wolfe, Protestant Crusade, 77-91.

<sup>88</sup> See Leys 122, 190.

<sup>89</sup> Bossy 388.

religion, “Thanks to the generous spirit of toleration that characterized the Governors of that time . . . ,”<sup>90</sup> but he was also careful to avoid any conflict with them. It is also seen in the free and friendly intercourse MacEachern had with the other religious leaders of the day and his freedom to enter Protestant houses of worship and perform spiritual ministry to Protestants. The person who would bring the ultramontane attitude to the Island was its second most influential Bishop, Peter McIntyre (1860-91).<sup>91</sup> He had fully adopted the ultramontane spirit of his day which had conquered England, Ireland and many other parts of the Catholic world in the decades just preceding his reign. His aggressive Catholicism collided with the strong anti-Catholic spirit then pervasive throughout the United Kingdom and its North American colonies, and the ongoing school questions would provide the forum in which the strong feelings on both sides could get fully expressed.

Parallels to MacEachern and McIntyre can be found in Newfoundland and Ontario. In the former the first three Bishops (1796-1829) worked collaboratively with the Protestant authorities and were appreciated by them, and also were on good terms with their Protestant neighbours. The next Bishop (Michael Fleming, 1829-1850), however, broke with their approach. He displayed an aggressive ultramontane Catholicism and played a major role in the sectarian conflicts that marked his period of ministry. He was inspired by Daniel O’Connell and emancipation in 1829 and was unashamedly active in politics, backing the radical Liberal-Catholics.<sup>92</sup> Still, like McIntyre, he made a major contribution to the strength and health of the Catholic Church in his colony, and was probably its greatest Bishop. In Ontario the first Bishop of Toronto was Michael Power (1842-7). Though ultramontane in his convictions he got along so well with the Protestant establishment that he was elected chair of the denominationally mixed school board,

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<sup>90</sup> MacMillan, 1721-1835, pp 179-80.

<sup>91</sup> He is a key figure in the sectarian wars after 1860 (see p 183).

<sup>92</sup> See McCann, “Culture.”

supported mixed schools, and was praised by Egerton Ryerson for his work.<sup>93</sup> His successor, the more overtly ultramontane Armand de Charbonnel, rather than supporting mixed schools almost succeeded in getting a totally separate school system in Ontario like that found in Quebec. The reigns of these three strongly ultramontane Bishops, all of whom also had strong, non-compromising personalities, turned out (not co-incidentally) to be the eras of the greatest Protestant-Catholic tension in each of their respective provinces. The less aggressive spirit of the pre-ultramontane priests not only made them more amenable to open relations with their Protestant neighbours but also meant they appeared less threatening to them.

### Conclusion

Throughout the pioneer years in Canada “normally a spirit of harmony and restraint prevailed . . . between Catholics and Protestants . . . .”<sup>94</sup> This harmony was the result of many factors: the demands of frontier living which forced people to co-operate; the relative weakness of the Established Church in the colonies and its generally co-operative approach; the spirit within Catholicism at the time which aimed to prove loyalty to the Crown and was passive in its religious expression, as opposed to the ultramontane spirit which would come to dominate in much of the country as early as 1830; the fact that the great influx of Irish Catholics was still in the future; the relatively tolerant attitude to Catholics then prevalent in the United Kingdom and the U.S.A.; and the strong but kindly character that pervaded so many of the pioneer clergy.<sup>95</sup> It was not until the pioneer communities began to be more

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<sup>93</sup> John S. Moir, The Church in the British Era (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1972), 171; Mark McGowan, “What did Michael Power Really Want? Questions Regarding the Origins of Catholic Separate Schools in Canada West,” CCHA Historical Studies 68 (2002): 85-104.

<sup>94</sup> Murphy, Christianity in Canada, 124

<sup>95</sup> No doubt this was all undergirded by the influence of Enlightenment thinking, as Lahey (49) noted in reference to Newfoundland around the turn of the nineteenth-century: “What the spirit

settled and prosperous (which in turn allowed for competing religious forces to build protective walls), Irish Catholic immigration significantly increased in the 1830s and 1840s, and anti-Catholicism reached a fever pitch in the wider English-speaking world from the mid-1830s to the mid-1870s, that serious Protestant - Catholic squabbling began to break out in British North America.

While this period for the most part witnessed fairly good relations between Protestants and Catholics in Britain, the USA and Canada, still buried not too far underneath the relatively harmonious feelings was the old sectarian baggage, nicely pictured by Governor Thomas Cochrane of Newfoundland as a “smooth surface covering the seeds of discord.”<sup>96</sup> He well caught the flavour of the “borrowed peace” period when he prophetically reported to Lord Bathurst in 1827: “A perfect harmony, or should I rather say, tranquillity exists between them [Protestants and Catholics], yet I am persuaded that a small spark could excite a flame not easily subdued.”<sup>97</sup> This spark was ignited in 1832 during Newfoundland’s first election. In like manner whatever ‘borrowed peace’ had been achieved in the first 80 years of P.E.I.’s settlement was soon to be shattered by the most serious riot in Island history. It would expose the barely buried religious antipathies and give birth to its sectarian wars.

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of the times emphasized - ‘freedom’ and ‘toleration’ - social and political conditions demanded.”

<sup>96</sup> PRO, CO 194/87, fols. 106-11, Cochrane to Lord Stanley, April 8, 1834, cited by Lahey 51.

<sup>97</sup> PRO, CO 194/45, fols. 131 ff, Cochrane to Lord Bathurst, May 1, 1827, cited by Lahey 51.

## PART II

“The Sectarian Wars”

1847-77

CHAPTER 4  
POPULAR ANTI-CATHOLICISM IN BRITAIN AND  
NORTH AMERICA IN THE MID-1800s

There once were two cats of Kilkenny'  
Each thought there was one cat too many  
So they fought and they fit  
And they scratched and they bit  
Til instead of two cats there weren't any!'

As we have seen, relations between Protestants and Catholics were relatively good in Britain and North America from roughly 1782 to 1832, but this all changed in the decades following emancipation. Since Henry VIII anti-Catholicism had been State-sponsored but after the Penal Laws were repealed “popular” anti-Catholicism became more apparent. This was expressed in newspaper editorials and letters, anti-Catholic pamphlets and books, public lectures warning of the dangers of Popery, sundry political issues (especially around education), and not infrequently mob violence. The years from 1832-77 (peaking in the 1850s) I have dubbed the Sectarian Wars Period because this was when anti-Catholic fervour at the popular level was at its most intense in Britain, the U.S.A. and Canada. Nearly every area experienced pitched sectarian battles during this time, of both the verbal and physical type, though they were initiated at different times and lasted for varying lengths. The sectarian wars of 1847-77 on Prince Edward Island were thus in no way unique, but were merely a local manifestation of an almost universal phenomenon in the North Atlantic world.

This chapter will give a brief overview of what was happening elsewhere as context

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<sup>1</sup> Traditional Irish limerick.

for the events on the Island. It will be seen that while the events and attitudes of the mother country made an impact in North America, still the local religious and ethnic mix, the local political issues and culture, and even the local personalities usually played the biggest role in shaping the precise form of the sectarian strife in each community. There were many common features in the various states and provinces, the school issues, the heavy Irish immigration, political parties being polarized by sect, and so on, and yet these were all manifested in quite different ways from place to place.

### England and Scotland (1830s-1878)

Anti-Catholic fervour in England was focussed on three issues: Maynooth, Papal Aggression and the inspection of the convents. In regard to the first, Ireland's Catholic Maynooth Seminary had been given a permanent endowment in 1845 and for nearly two decades Protestants worked vigorously to overturn it. In regard to the second, in 1850 the Pope restored the Catholic hierarchy in England, which led to a vehement response from Protestants. About 5% of the population signed petitions protesting against the new Roman hierarchy and even Prime Minister John Russell entered the fray with his famous *Durham Letter* to *The Times* on November 7, opining that he considered "the late aggression of the Pope upon our Protestantism as insolent and insidious."<sup>2</sup> As for the convents, Henry Drummond in the House of Commons had deemed them "either prisons or brothels."<sup>3</sup> After many attempts an inspection bill was finally passed in 1870 but the subsequent searches showed the convents were free of abuses and after 1871 the convent question was seen as a joke. After this, anti-Catholic issues receded from the forefront in England.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The full letter can be found in E. R. Norman 159.

<sup>3</sup> Cited by Paz 17.

<sup>4</sup> Some of the key books on this period in England include E.R. Norman, Paz and Wolffe, Protestant Crusade.



Anti-Catholicism peaked about the same time in Scotland. There “anti-Catholicism was essentially anti Irish,”<sup>5</sup> albeit with deep philosophical roots going back to Knox and the Reformers, and it grew with the large influx of poor Irish Catholics to the lowlands (especially Glasgow) in the first half of the nineteenth century. In Greenock in 1851 the “Angel Gabriel”, a colourful anti-Catholic preacher, whipped up the people to such an extent that Catholic homes were wrecked, Catholic churches attacked and Catholic immigrants lost their jobs.<sup>6</sup>

### The United States of America (1834-57)

In the United States anti-Catholicism, which had lain dormant from the Revolution until the 1820s, started to become particularly hostile in the mid-1830s.<sup>7</sup> The burning of the Ursuline Convent in Charlestown, Massachusetts, in 1834<sup>8</sup> really ignited this spirit, leading to more Catholic facilities being attacked elsewhere in the country and anti-Catholic propaganda (like the Maria Monk stories) proliferating. The next major episode of violence was the Native American Riots in Philadelphia in 1844. It killed at least twenty and injured over 100.<sup>9</sup> The riots were sparked by a previous decision of the School Board to accede to the Bishop’s request to allow Catholic children to read the Douay version of the Bible in class. Many Irish homes and two Catholic churches were burned down. The second round of the battle lasted three days and was an armed stand-off, with guns and cannon on both sides, in the courtyard of a Catholic church. The spirit spread to New York City but Bishop

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<sup>5</sup> S. Bruce, No Pope of Rome, 25.

<sup>6</sup> Gallagher 20.

<sup>7</sup> For a good summary of the following see Billington.

<sup>8</sup> See Jack Tager, Boston Riots: Three Centuries of Boston Riots (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2001).

<sup>9</sup> Michael Feldburg, The Philadelphia Riots of 1844. A Study of Ethnic Conflict (London: Greenwood Press, 1975).

Hughes threatened that “if a single Catholic church were burned in New York, the city would become a second Moscow,”<sup>10</sup> and then placed 1,000-2,000 armed men about each of his churches.

The decade following these riots saw a more peaceful version of sectarian squabbling, but the virulence came back with a vengeance when the Know Nothing party burst upon the scene. It was formed in 1849 as a ‘No Popery’ party, though it only began to exert some influence in 1852. Its object was to make sure people voted only for the native born and that all offices be restricted to them. All foreigners, Roman Catholics particularly, were excluded. Surprisingly in 1854 they elected 75 members to the federal Congress, and in Massachusetts the governor, all state officers, all senators and 376 of 378 members of the State House were from the Know Nothing Party. In 1855 five more states in the Northeast became Know Nothing states. Expectations were high at that point that they would even place their man in the White House the following year, but by then their influence was waning as the slavery issue took centre stage.

Adjunct clubs to the Know Nothing movement were quite violent and the Democrats likewise had their own similar clubs. There were many conflicts between the two from 1854-57, most occurring around elections. In Baltimore eight were killed and fifty wounded, New Orleans saw four killed and St Louis ten. The worst incident was “Bloody Monday” in Louisville on August 5, 1855, when Germans and Natives clashed. At least twenty were killed and several hundred wounded. In the mid-1850s a dozen Catholic churches were burned and priests were abused, one even being tarred and feathered in Maine. By 1857 the Know Nothing party had disappeared, as meteor-like as it had arrived, most members becoming Republicans. Anti-Catholicism in the States was never as

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<sup>10</sup> Cited by Billington 231.

acrimonious again, but to this day still has not disappeared.<sup>11</sup>

### Ontario and Manitoba (1850-97)

Sectarianism in Ontario in the pioneer years was more apt to be between competing Protestant sects, especially over the Clergy Reserves issue, than it was to be between Catholics and Protestants. Not until 1850, when the “Papal Aggression” controversy in England ignited a newspaper debate between Protestant George Brown<sup>12</sup> and his Catholic respondents, did serious conflict between Catholics and Protestants begin to take place in the province. The debate became so intense that seats in the 1851 election were won or lost on the basis of this transplanted issue. This issue had barely abated when Father Alessandro Gavazzi, a convert who became an internationally famous speaker against Catholicism, came to Canada East, and re-kindled the sectarian fires. He was attacked by a mob in Quebec City and just miraculously escaped injury. Then in Montreal several were killed and 50 injured after his lecture. In 1855 Robert Corrigan, a convert to Protestantism, was murdered and his killers acquitted by a Catholic jury in Canada East, raising great indignation in Canada West. The last half of that decade and the first half of the next saw frequent clashes between the Orange and the Green. Separate schools in Ontario became a hot political issue with the arrival of the ultramontane Bishop of Toronto, Armand de Charbonnel (1850-60), and has not abated completely even today. A significant number of Irish Catholics in the colony flirted dangerously with Fenianism but after the American Fenians invaded Fort Erie their voice in the press, the *Canadian Freeman*, denounced the movement.<sup>13</sup> That and the renewed separation legislated between Upper and Lower Canada

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<sup>11</sup> See Jenkins and Massa.

<sup>12</sup> Brown was the editor of the largest paper in British America, the Globe, which was ardently Reform in its politics.

<sup>13</sup> Moir, Church in British Era, 180.

in the B.N.A. Act of 1867 (which established Canada as a country) brought an abatement to the sectarian tensions in Ontario for nearly another decade.

Even so, overt tensions continued longer in Ontario and Manitoba than in the Maritime Provinces. The major events were: a) the Riel Rebellions of 1870 and 1885; b) the Jubilee Riots in Toronto in 1875;<sup>14</sup> c) the elections of 1886, 1890 and 1894 when the Tories and newspapers waged a 'No Popery' campaign; d) the Jesuit Estates Act passed by the Quebec government in 1888 to re-imburse the Jesuits for lands lost when they had been temporarily suppressed (Ontario's Protestants were particularly distressed that the government had consulted the Pope on this); e) the forming of the Protestant Protection Association in 1891 to denounce Catholics and oppose their participation in public life; and f) the Manitoba School Question (1890-97) when the provincial government formally abolished separate schools and the official use of French, then partially re-instated them, providing for bi-lingual instruction in any non-English languages in elementary school and religious instruction after school hours.<sup>15</sup>

### Newfoundland (1832-1885)

Serious Protestant-Catholic tensions in the 1800s rose first in Newfoundland soon after the appointment of the ultramontane Michael Fleming as Vicar Apostolic in 1830 (Bishop from 1847-50). Newfoundland was 50% Catholic at this time and nearly all were Irish, but 90% of the wealth and effectively all positions of political influence were in Protestant hands. Fleming challenged the Anglican ascendancy from the beginning, by simply refusing to pay fees to Anglican clergy for marriages and burials Catholic priests had

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<sup>14</sup> See Galvin.

<sup>15</sup> See Kenneth McLaughlin, "Riding the Protestant Horse: The Manitoba School Question and Canadian Politics. 1890-1896," CCHA Historical Studies 53 (1986): 39-52; Lovell Clark, The Manitoba School Question: Majority Rule or Minority Rights? (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1968).

performed, and thereby ending that system. He then successfully petitioned the government in the first legislative session of 1833 to give Catholics and all dissenters the right to perform their own religious ceremonies. While championing the rights of dissenters in this matter, however, he was no ecumenist like the previous Vicars Apostolic in Newfoundland, for during his reign the Catholics took over the interdenominational Benevolent Irish Society and transformed it into a Catholic political machine. Fleming's goal, in his own words, was "the complete triumph of Catholicity" in Newfoundland.<sup>16</sup> This was not just a spiritual statement by this Irish disciple of O'Connell, but a break from the policy employed by the previous three bishops, of collaborating with the Protestant authorities. He was an uncompromising individual who became very involved in politics, backing the radical Liberal Catholics.

In 1832 Representative Government was established in Newfoundland, and though it was three years after emancipation the Colonial Office and local elites were effectively trying to make it into a Protestant colony: "Protestant ideology played a greater role than in almost any other colony as a means of combatting the political militancy of the Catholic Irish, who formed half the population of the Island."<sup>17</sup> From the first election in 1832 Newfoundland's politics exhibited "polarized opinion along denominational and ethnic lines."<sup>18</sup> This marked the beginning of serious sectarianism in Newfoundland politics that would continue into the 1860s and even recur sporadically after that. During this election, as had happened in Ireland in the emancipation battles of the 1820s, Catholic churches displayed political posters and priests gave political messages in sermons. The Protestant backlash was in full force by 1834. 'No Popery' material began to appear in the papers, the

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<sup>16</sup> Cited by McCann, "Bishop," 94.

<sup>17</sup> McCann, "Culture," 272.

<sup>18</sup> McCann, "Bishop," 85. Lahey traces the "seeds of discord" that led to Catholic discontent previous to this election.

government made attempts to have Fleming removed, and Protestants united together to overturn the school act and try to force the King James Version Bible into the schools.

By 1837 the Catholic-dominated Liberal reformers were in firm control of the Assembly and were dubbed by the Tories as the “priests’ party.” Over the next four years the two parties clashed over nearly everything. Newfoundland was seen in England as being a hotbed of popery. The London Times of January 11, 1841, declared that: “‘what Ireland is on a larger scale, Newfoundland is on a smaller’ -- a community of ‘enfranchised Papists,’ in which priests played the role of insurgents and Catholic mobs went about ‘murdering and burning’. . . .”<sup>19</sup> Relations then improved for a dozen years or so, due in large part to the unifying policies of Governor Sir John Harvey (1841-1847). He got the Bishop to withdraw from the political arena in return for the promise of patronage appointments, set up a separate school system with the support of both groups, and established some political stability.

In 1855 Responsible Government was established. It resulted from a ten year campaign of Liberal-Catholics and was seen “by Tory Protestants as the triumph of the ‘Catholic minority’ over ‘Protestant interests’.”<sup>20</sup> Still the colony was not as strife-worn as it had been in the 1830s. The first election favoured the Liberals by a 16-14 margin, most of the Liberals and the overall majority of the Assemblymen being Catholic. The 1861 election was also sectarian-based. The Protestants were Conservative and the Catholics Liberal. Both the Catholic and Anglican bishops were involved. There were riots in Conception Bay (one dead and ten injured). No polling took place in Harbour Grace due to voter intimidation, in spite of the 100 troops dispatched there, and four seats were left unfilled. Governor Bannerman dismissed the Liberals due to mal-administration but this led

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<sup>19</sup> Cited by McCann, “Bishop,” 93.

<sup>20</sup> McCann, “Culture,” 284.

to a demonstration outside the legislature over the “allegedly fraudulent Conservative election victory.”<sup>21</sup> Troops were brought in, shots were fired, three demonstrators were killed and another twenty wounded. The positive offshoot to all this violence was that the Anglican and Catholic Bishops decided to withdraw from political activity, and the Tories settled on an accommodationist approach and began “to allocate all offices of emolument and honour throughout society on a basis roughly equal to the strength of the main denominations.”<sup>22</sup> This formally began in 1865 when two Catholics were given office in the Conservative administration, which event marked the beginning of the end for the Liberal-Catholic and Tory- Protestant alliances. By institutionalizing denominationalism Newfoundland removed the underlying causes of religious strife and prevented its capital, St John’s, from becoming a “Transatlantic Ulster.”<sup>23</sup>

In spite of the peace found through these gentlemen’s agreements, Newfoundland probably experienced more sectarian strife from 1870 to the present than any other Canadian province. Sectarianism continued to play a role in some elections, 1873, 1878, 1903, and particularly in 1919 and 1923. The most divided election, however, was in 1885. The Reform party elected 22 Protestants and the Liberals 14 Catholics (Protestants by this time were the majority in the Province). The voting was on strict religious lines and the Cabinet was all Protestant. What precipitated this political divide was the worst incident of communal hatred in Newfoundland’s history. At an Orange parade on December 26, 1883, in Harbour Grace, 500 unarmed Orangemen marched towards a Catholic area and were confronted by 150 armed and inebriated Irishmen. The military were brought in. By the end of the day four Orangemen and one Catholic had been shot and killed, and 17 wounded. It was followed up by shoddy trials and all the Irish were declared not guilty. The

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Buckner and Reid 374.

Protestants were outraged. Though most had distanced themselves from the Orange Order (formed in 1863) they were now becoming united, as exemplified in the forming of a Protestant Union in Harbour Grace in July of 1884. “The Harbour Grace Affray . . . caused bitter and long-lasting division in Newfoundland , affecting not just politics and religion but ordinary social intercourse,”<sup>24</sup> and it was dealt with using the elite accommodation approach initiated in the 1860s. In 1886 two prominent Catholic Liberals joined the cabinet and by 1887 eleven of the fourteen Catholics members were sitting with the government. From then on everyone did all they could to ensure that the major religious groups were fairly represented in legislature and government service. The main issues of sectarian tension in Newfoundland after 1865 centred around the denominational schools issue, the involvement of the Orangemen and the Catholic clergy in politics, and even joining the Canadian Confederation in 1949 (many of Irish extraction opposed it because they saw it as being reminiscent of Ireland joining Britain in 1800 and also feared they would lose their separate school system). In 1997 the denominational school system was abolished, 73% voting in favour of this in a referendum.

### New Brunswick (1841-75)

The second colony in Canada to see significant sectarian animosities was New Brunswick, where it centred around conflict between the Orange and Green. The Orange Order had come to the colony in 1831 and by 1850 there were 123 lodges claiming a membership of 10,000. The organization achieved greater popular success in nineteenth-century North America only in Ontario. About this time New Brunswick was 35% Irish, the second highest such proportion in the Canadian colonies after Newfoundland. The largest influx took place between 1845-54, 14,000 alone landing in the port of Saint John in

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<sup>24</sup> Patrick O’Flaherty, Lost Country. The Rise and Fall of Newfoundland (St John’s, Nfld: Long Beach Press, 2005), 150-1.



1847. Even so most of the Irish descendants were from pre-famine families, as most of the arrivals in the famine period soon moved on to the United States. A little over half of the Irish in the colony were Protestant but in Saint John 68% were Catholic. Unlike the Catholic Acadians of the colony “they settled in the midst of Protestant strongholds . . . Catholicism bloomed in a Protestant garden . . . often in enclaves, and established their church as a religious and cultural bulwark against alienation.”<sup>25</sup> The arrival and settlement of thousands of poor Irish Catholics in the midst of the Protestant majority, in an economically depressed decade, fuelled ethno-religious tensions and conflicts throughout the 1840s, particularly in the towns of Saint John, Fredericton and Woodstock.

At a large meeting in Saint John in 1839 delegates condemned the sectarian violence in Boston and other American cities, and “applauded themselves on the good fortune of living in a British colony free of such acrimonious religious strife,”<sup>26</sup> but the next decade would see it become rampant with “such acrimonious religious strife.” The first sectarian clash occurred in 1841 in Saint John and clashes continued throughout the decade, 1848 being the only year when there was no significant violence. Significant riots occurred in Saint John in 1842 and 1845, and in Fredericton in 1847, and major ones took place in Woodstock (up to ten killed, guns, clubs and bayonets being the weapons of choice)<sup>27</sup> and Saint John in 1847. The climactic and biggest riot in New Brunswick history happened on July 12, 1849, when 600 Orangemen marched upon the home streets of about 500 Catholics in Portland near Saint John. Hundreds of shots were fired, hundreds were injured and at least a dozen died.

In all these riots only Irish Catholics were convicted and the rare Orangeman who

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<sup>25</sup> See, Riots, 56. Catholics accounted for about 1/3 of New Brunswick’s total population in the 1850s.

<sup>26</sup> Cited by *ibid* 147.

<sup>27</sup> See Scott W. See, “‘Mickeyes and Demons’ vs. ‘Bigots and Boobies’: The Woodstock Riot of 1847,” Acadiensis, Autumn, 1991: 110-31.

was arrested was soon let off. The most blatant example of this injustice happened in Woodstock. In spite of all the confirmed dead being Catholics, of the 139 people arrested and charged not one was a Protestant. Small skirmishes continued into the first half of the next decade but the 1849 riot ended mob riots in New Brunswick for over another two decades. Scott See attributes their ending to four main causes: the Orange Order had established dominance on the streets and in the courts; they intentionally put an end to their parades and violence in hopes of getting incorporated;<sup>28</sup> the tide of famine immigrants had subsided; and there was a significant upturn in the economy.

In contrast to the other Atlantic colonies, the 1850s and 60s were peaceful in New Brunswick on the sectarian front. That is not to say that anti-Catholicism ceased, for “by mid-century anti-papal rhetoric in New Brunswick was ubiquitous,”<sup>29</sup> job discrimination was common<sup>30</sup> and Orangemen played a major role in politics and patronage. During and after the riots “a fusion between all levels of authority and the Orange Order had taken place. . . . As the end of the century approached, the Orange Order would seek and gain political and economic entrenchment . . . [and] the organization would become synonymous with patronage.”<sup>31</sup>

In regard to public schooling things were generally better for Catholics in New Brunswick than in the other Maritime Provinces, but the battle for separate schools, while not as extended there, was even hotter. In 1858 the *Parish Schools Act* established a Board of Education but the real power was in the hands of the local trustees. The vague wording

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<sup>28</sup> See, *Riots*, 186. From 1850-75 the Bill to Incorporate the Orange Lodge was rejected a dozen times by the House, the debate over separate schools in 1871-5 being the motivating force that saw it finally get through in 1875 (see his pp 107-11). The following year the Orangemen celebrated with a massive parade.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid 63. He gives many examples on the following seven pages.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid 65.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid 186.

of the act allowed for a *de facto*, though not official, separate school system. Nearly all the schools were denominational. The Protestants were successful in getting Bible Reading authorized, “without note or comment,” but the Catholics were free to use the Douay version. All this changed in 1871 when the government instituted the *Common Schools Act*. It provided for free and compulsory education but gave no support to any denominational school. Bible reading and the Lord’s Prayer were allowed to begin classes. The bill was protested by the Acadians at the federal government and court levels, based on Section 93 of the BNA Act. This section ensured that if a province had separate schools established “by law . . . at the union” then it would also have them after union. The Acadians lost because the *de facto* separate school system in New Brunswick had not been established “by law.” The 1874 election was fought on the issue, thirty-six seats being won by those who supported the *Common Schools Act* of 1871, and five by separate school supporters, the latter all in majority Acadian counties. The battle cry of George King, eventual Premier, was “Vote for the Queen against the Pope.”<sup>32</sup>

The separate school battle in New Brunswick was much more violent than on P.E.I. The Catholic clergy had asked parents to withhold their school taxes and many did, which led to priests being arrested and their property confiscated. In January, 1875, a month of upheaval climaxed in the Caraquet Riots, in which two men died. After this a compromise was reached in 1875 – Catholic school buildings were used, Catholic students were grouped into the same schools where possible, Sisters were allowed to teach in their habits, and textbooks were checked for material that might be offensive to Catholics. The breakup of this system began with school consolidation in 1967.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Cited by Stanley 22.

<sup>33</sup> On the school issue in New Brunswick see Toner, Little, Stanley and William B. Hamilton, “Society and Schools in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island,” in Canadian Education, A History, ed J. Donald Wilson (Prentice Hall, 1970), 106-25.

### Nova Scotia (1856-63)

Prior to 1856 there had been very little public discord between Protestants and Catholics in Nova Scotia, though in 1843 and 1847 there had been some minor outcries against the rising influence of Catholicism in the colony.<sup>34</sup> Most of the sectarian conflict was in fact between the Established and Dissenting churches. By 1856, however, the acrimony there was on par with that in P.E.I. Nova Scotia's sectarian wars centred around Joseph Howe, a newspaper editor and lifelong politician with the Reform Party, who was first elected in 1836. For the first 20 years of his political career he was on excellent terms with the Catholics and Irish in the province, but by 1857 he had become Catholic enemy number one.

Three sectarian disagreements helped to foment these wars. The first was a dispute between Irish Catholics and Howe related to whether or not to support the British in the Crimean War. Next, in early 1856 two Catholics left the Liberal Party because Catholics were not being granted enough patronage appointments.<sup>35</sup> Finally, in an abortive new school act, Premier Young had agreed to include separate schools but then had to retract this offer due to a bitter Protestant backlash.

The event which really initiated the conflict, however, was the Gourlay Shanty Riot of May 26, 1856, in which about 80-100 Irish Catholic labourers attacked and injured 15-20 Scottish Presbyterians for insulting their faith. Howe portrayed this as "an attack upon Protestants, prompted by Catholic intolerance, and bigotry, with the intention to rule the Province and dominate Protestantism."<sup>36</sup> In December nine of the alleged rioters were

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<sup>34</sup> For a good overview of the sectarian conflict in Nova Scotia see A.J.B. Johnston, "Popery."

<sup>35</sup> See Meagher 81. The best overview of the issue is J. Murray Beck, Joseph Howe. The Briton Becomes Canadian 1848-73, vol II (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1983), 94-137.

<sup>36</sup> Cited by Meagher 35, original source not given.

acquitted in two trials by split juries, nearly wholly divided along sectarian lines, except for one Protestant who voted with the Catholics for acquittal.

Prior to this trial there had been some public debate surrounding the incident but it was really only after the trial that Howe began to make it into a political issue, initiated by his hard-hitting letter of December 27, 1856, in the Morning Chronicle. He said the riot was not just a matter of “bad rum” but was due to the “infernial spirit of religious intolerance and persecution,”<sup>37</sup> and Catholics were propagating their religion by the bludgeon. The debate continued in the papers and by January 1857 his invective had turned Catholic Nova Scotia entirely against him and his Liberal Party, even though up to this time Catholics in Nova Scotia had supported the Reform Party / Liberals. In February all eight Catholic members left the Liberal party, along with two Protestants in Catholic majority ridings. On February 18 the Liberals lost a non-confidence vote 28-22.<sup>38</sup>

Howe viewed Archbishop Walsh as the chief villain in the Catholic defection because of the control he exercised over the Scottish Catholic and Acadian members of the House. To Howe this was a local example of the Papal Aggression that had been witnessed in England. He also felt that the Catholic members now thought that by switching sides they could rule the province and concluded that a Protestant majority was needed to prevent the Catholics from abusing this balance of power. By early March Howe began to establish the *Protestant Association of Nova Scotia*, but its influence turned out to be slight, partly because it was completely rejected by the Anglican Bishop.

Over the next four years Howe and others wrote many bitter anti-Catholic tirades in the papers and spoke the same way in the House. Catholic papers and politicians responded

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<sup>37</sup> Cited by Meagher 116.

<sup>38</sup> An Island paper, the Protector and Christian Witness, Mar 18, 1857, re-printed a long letter of Howe's entitled “To the People of Nova Scotia,” which is a good summary of the whole issue and his concerns.

in kind, though in general they seemed to have evinced a more Christian spirit than the Protestants. Howe and Premier Young declared: "The Liberal and Conservative parties were at an end, and that it was a question of Catholic and Protestant."<sup>39</sup> Howe called upon Protestants "to unite and exclude Catholics from all official positions."<sup>40</sup> He saw the question as being that of who was going to rule the colony, "The loyal English population, or a band of disloyal Irish Catholics?"<sup>41</sup> On January 3, 1857, the Presbyterian Witness (the most anti-Catholic of the papers) said: "It is a question . . . between Protestants and Romanists; between men who love Queen Victoria and honor her, and men who are abject slaves of the Popes of Rome."<sup>42</sup> Religion dominated the first two weeks of discussion in the last session of the House, and feelings were so high the Members of the House of Assembly came close to physical blows on a few occasions.

The next election was held on May 12, 1859. It was the only election in Nova Scotia primarily fought upon and decided by the religious question. The Liberals played the sectarian card to a slim 29-26 victory. They had no Catholic members. The Chronicle of May 14 declared: "Nova Scotia, Protestant Nova Scotia, is free."<sup>43</sup> Premier William Young in February 1860 said that Catholics should maintain their rights and liberties but we "will not consent to admit them to a participation in political power"<sup>44</sup> because they abused it when they had it. Even so, the Liberal government "made no particular attempt to carry out the policy they clamoured so loudly for during the political and religious storm they created."<sup>45</sup> In 1863 Howe's Liberals lost as the appeal to sectarianism no longer had any

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<sup>39</sup> Cited by Meagher 23-4, original source not given.

<sup>40</sup> Cited by Meagher 45, original source not given.

<sup>41</sup> Cited by Meagher 63, original source not given.

<sup>42</sup> Cited by Meagher 149-50.

<sup>43</sup> Cited by Beck, Howe, 136.

<sup>44</sup> The Chronicle, cited by Meagher 75, exact date not given.

<sup>45</sup> Cited by Meagher 192. Original source not given.

resonance with the voters. In 1867 Howe publically apologized before Catholic audiences for what he had done.

The 1864 School Act established a free, non-sectarian school system, but compromises reached soon after between Premier Charles Tupper and Bishop Thomas Connolly resulted in a *de facto* separate system that satisfied the Catholic community. All three Maritime Provinces would end up with a school system that was legally non-sectarian but in practice nearly as denominationally divided as the officially separate system in Ontario, but Nova Scotia reached this end “with a freedom from sectarian strife and bitterness which has been the happy fortune of no other province attempting a similar course.”<sup>46</sup>

#### Prince Edward Island

P.E.I. fits into the general pattern seen throughout Britain and North America. Prior to the mid-1840s Protestants and Catholics on the Island got along tolerably well until the Belfast Riot. Over the next nine years tensions grew till the Bible Question in 1856 sparked a sectarian conflagration. Edward MacDonald thought that “with the possible exception of the Land Question, no other question in the 1860s smoldered longer, flared up oftener, or burned more fiercely” than the three education and religion questions.<sup>47</sup> The land question had always been the major political issue on P.E.I., from the drawing of the lots in 1767 until it was finally resolved in 1875. During the period covered by this chapter land continued to be a huge political issue, along with Confederation and the railway, but even so all three were usually “relegated to a secondary position” behind the sectarian-based

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<sup>46</sup> Sister Francis Xavier, “Educational Legislation in Nova Scotia and the Catholics,” CCHA Report 24 (1957): 58 (cf pp 61,67). For more details see p 198.

<sup>47</sup> E. MacDonald, SDU, 71.

education issues.<sup>48</sup>

These education issues, however, will receive but brief treatment in this thesis, for they have been thoroughly covered elsewhere.<sup>49</sup> A short summary of them will be provided in the final chapter of this section. In stark contrast to this the event which initially provoked the Island's sectarian wars, the Belfast Riot of 1847, will be given extensive treatment, because many aspects of it have been misunderstood and its pivotal role in launching the great sectarian tensions on the Island not recognized.

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<sup>48</sup> David Weale, Political-Religious Strife in Prince Edward Island, 1860-73 (paper for Queens University, Feb 17, 1970), 8.

<sup>49</sup> See p 6, n 9. Other extensive treatments of this period can be found in Weale, Strife; E. MacDonald, SDU, 59-102; Sister Olga McKenna, "The History of Higher Education in the Province of Prince Edward Island," The Canadian Catholic Historical Association (Study Sessions No. 38), 1971: 26-36; Wayne MacKinnon, The Life of the Party. A History of the Liberal Party in Prince Edward Island (Summerside: Williams & Crue, 1973), 29-34, 47-9, 53-62; Margaret Hagen, "The Political implications of the Separate School Question (1869-1877) on Prince Edward Island" (BA Thesis, SDU, 1961); Derrell Ignatius McGuigan, "The Historical Antecedents of the Free School Act and the Public School Act of P.E.I." (PhD Thesis, University of Ottawa, 1956), 28-9, 60-1, 103-22, 142-58, 163; MacMillan, 1835-1891, chs 11, 13-18, 20, 23.



## CHAPTER 5

### THE BELFAST RIOT - PRELIMINARY MATTERS

In the general election in the summer of 1846 Reform candidates John Little and John MacDougall defeated incumbent Tories William Douse and Alexander MacLean in the Third District of Queens County (3rd Queens). Due to various incidents of violence the Tory candidates successfully contested the election and a by-election was set for March 1, 1847. The most serious riot ever on Prince Edward Island took place at this by-election. About 200 Scottish Protestants and 300 Irish Catholics spent the afternoon beating each other with clubs, and by the end of the day at least three men were dead and up to a hundred others injured. In the second by-election of March 19, overseen by about 200 soldiers and special constables, Douse and MacLean were returned, being unopposed. Presbyterian David Ross, who lived in lot 34, made the following succinct entry in his diary on April 27, 1847:

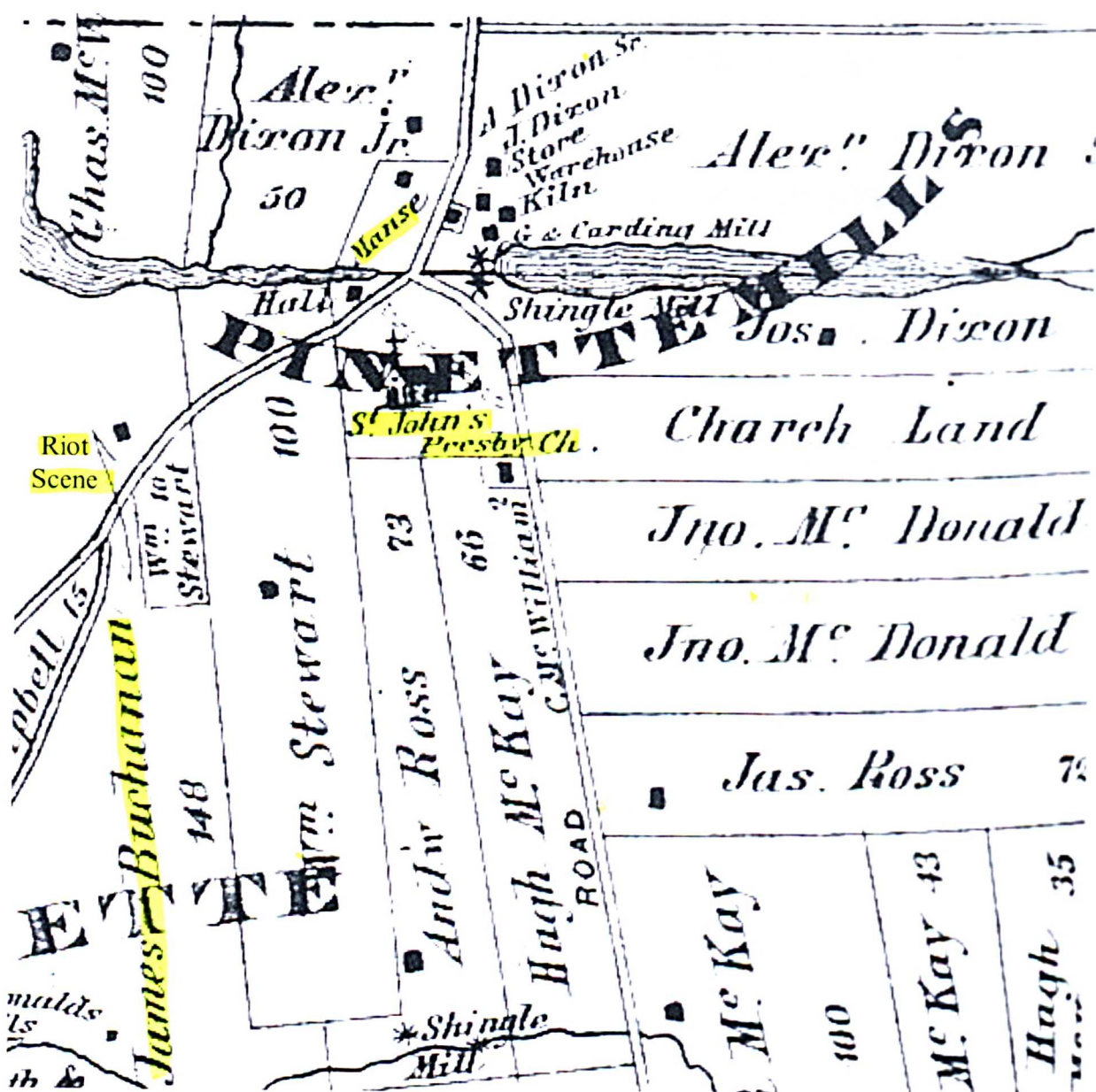
The election at Belfast contested last general election . . . sitting members deposed - new election - bloody murder - 5 men killed and devil knows how many wounded - bravery of the Scots - flight of the Monaghans and not election . . . again there. . . soldiers, militia and special constables in droves sent down to keep the peace - no riot.<sup>1</sup>

While the riot is often treated today in a comical way Ross's quote shows it was certainly no laughing matter at the time. The truth in fact is that it was so violent it gave birth to the bitter sectarian wars on the Island from 1847-77, and as such was a pivotal moment in Island history.

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<sup>1</sup> The David Ross Diary 1836-79, no publishing information, p 34. Available in P.E.I. Special Collections at U.P.E.I.

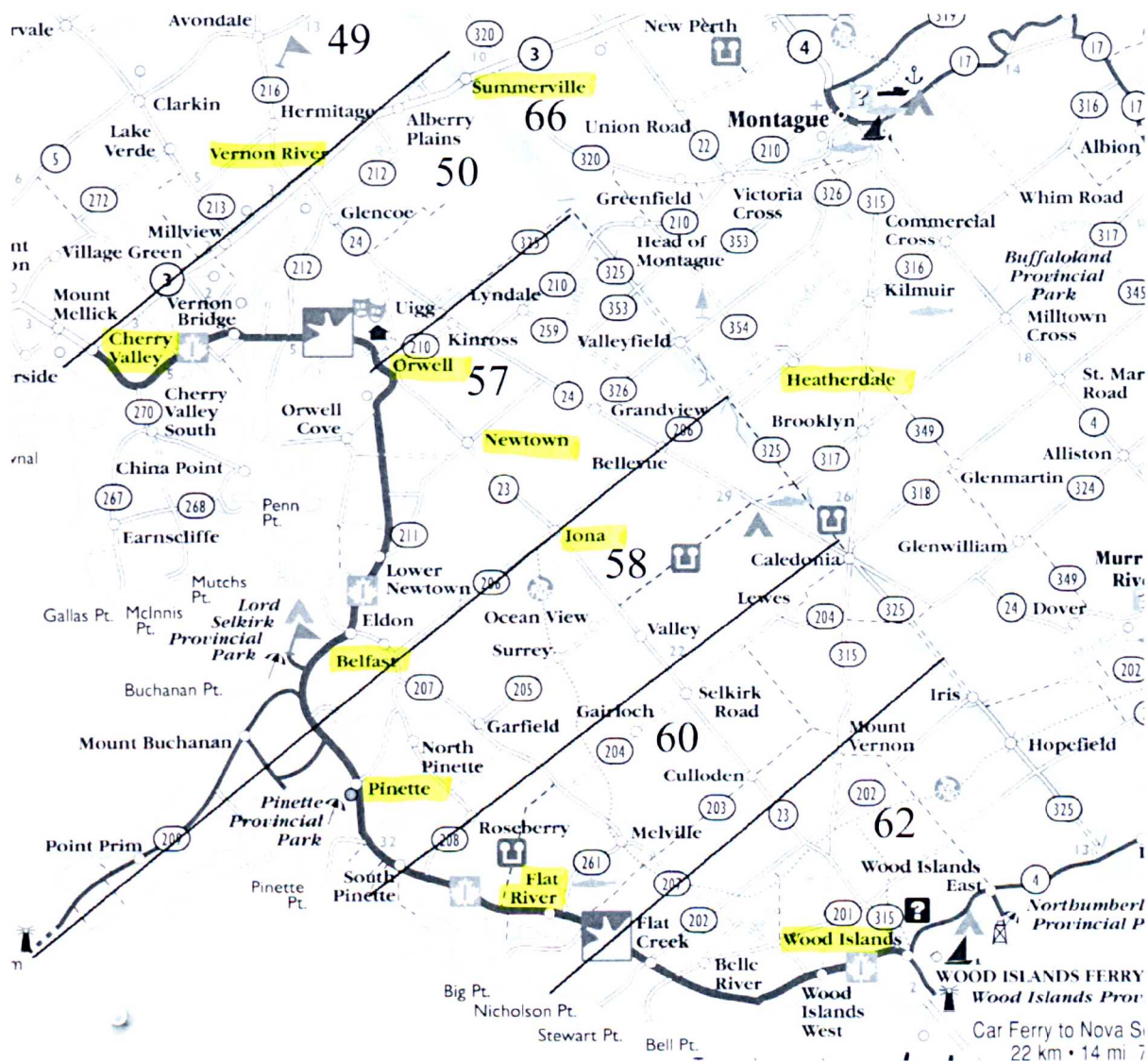
# MAP OF PINETTE MILLS / BELFAST, 1880



It is less than a half-mile from the riot scene to either the Manse or the Church.

Map taken from Meacham's Atlas of Prince Edward Island, 1880.

# MAP OF III QUEEN'S ELECTORAL DISTRICT



Pinette Mills and Belfast are two names for the same community, centered around the St John's Presbyterian Church.

Map taken from the 2008 Government Map of the Island. Used by permission.

## Sources

The primary sources for this event are two weekly papers, the Islander and the Royal Gazette, the Journals of the House (JHA), and judicial records and official correspondence that are available in the P.E.I. Public Archives.<sup>2</sup> There is also some oral and folk history concerning the event. The oldest of these is the Scottish song, “The Belfast Riot,”<sup>3</sup> which likely was written within months of the event happening. It is a highly partisan telling of the story but in many ways must still be regarded as an eyewitness account. The Presbyterian and Evangelical Protestant Union of February 15, 1877, carried some eyewitness recollections. MacQueen’s book on the Skye Pioneers<sup>4</sup> summarizes the Scottish version of this event and contains a few oral recollections. Hannah Buchanan’s term paper<sup>5</sup> contains interview material with two local residents and some research on the awareness of the event among residents today. Hornby’s oral history of Belfast<sup>6</sup> includes some twentieth-century traditions. These latter two are interesting for interpretation but add little to the story.

The secondary literature can be sub-divided into four categories. First, most general histories of P.E.I. “are by and large sketchy and uncritical,”<sup>7</sup> but a few do cover the event effectively, albeit briefly, including Sutherland (1861), MacMillan (1913) and Boyde Beck (1996).<sup>8</sup> Second, the local twentieth-century histories by Belfast residents are all quite basic

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<sup>2</sup> See the Bibliography for a detailed listing of these.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>4</sup> Malcolm MacQueen, Skye Pioneers and the Island (Winnipeg: Stovel Company, 1929), 31-2, 111-4.

<sup>5</sup> Hannah Buchanan, “Cudgels and Cognizance” Nov 18, 2005 (term paper, available in the P.E.I. Collection at U.P.E.I.).

<sup>6</sup> Susan Hornby, ed, Belfast People. An Oral History of Belfast Prince Edward Island (Charlottetown: Tea Hill Press, 1992), 120, 249.

<sup>7</sup> H.T. Holman, “The Belfast Riot,” Island Magazine 14 (Fall/Winter 1983): 7.

<sup>8</sup> Rev G.S. Sutherland, A Manual of the Geography and Natural and Civil History of Prince Edward Island (Charlottetown: John Ross, 1861), 125-6; MacMillan, 1835-91, pp 69-70; Boyde

and seem to be based primarily on MacQueen and the common Scottish tradition in the area, except Alan Buchanan who uses Holman as his prime source.<sup>9</sup> Third, recent articles, by noted Canadian historians Ian Ross Robertson and J.M. Bumsted, are of value not so much for their re-telling of the story (they really add nothing to Holman and O'Grady below) but for their interpretative approach.<sup>10</sup> Finally, serious studies on the riot really only began in the 1970s. Paul Batchilder was the first to undertake this project but unfortunately he never completed it, and the only record we have of it is a sound cassette. Holman's fine article is the most thorough overview of the riots themselves and the subsequent legal developments. O'Grady's chapter is the best overall account, particularly for the context it provides. Even though his goal is confessedly partial – to “clarify the traditional Irish understanding of what happened”<sup>11</sup> – still he has done a remarkable job of laying out a full and objective accounting of the Riot.<sup>12</sup>

### The Electoral District and Candidates

The Riot occurred in the Third District of Queens, which ran from Cherry Valley to Wood Islands and then inland to the Kings County border, inclusive of Vernon River. It consisted of Lots 49, 50, 57, 58, 60 and 62. At the heart of this area is the Belfast District, and at the heart of Belfast stands the oldest Presbyterian church on the Island, St John's,

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Beck, Prince Edward Island: An Unauthorized History (Charlottetown: Acorn Press, 1996), 85-88.

<sup>9</sup> Hornby 4 (Introduction by Alan Buchanan); Jean M. MacLennan, From Shore to Shore (Edinburgh: Knox Press, 1977), 57; Mrs John A. Ross, “The Belfast Riot” in Brehaut 72-73; Mary Stuart Sage, The Lord Selkirk Settlers in Belfast Prince Edward Island (Privately Published, 1973), 29.

<sup>10</sup> J.M. Bumsted, “Parliamentary Privilege and Electoral Disputes on Colonial Prince Edward Island,” Island Magazine 27 (Spring/Summer 1990): 15-21; I.R. Robertson, “Highlanders,” 234-6.

<sup>11</sup> O'Grady 203.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Batchilder, “The Belfast Riots,” UPEI, W BATC c p1b, 1976, Cassette; Holman 3-7; O'Grady 203-30, 234, 238, 243-44, 289 (n 63).

built in 1826. Belfast itself is not even a village, just a rural area.

Lord Selkirk had settled four of these lots (57, 58, 60, 62) in 1803 with about 500 Scottish Protestants.<sup>13</sup> He believed that establishing “national settlements” which were linguistically, ethnically and religiously homogeneous was the best approach for settling British North America. The Scots made their homes on the best land along the coast and up to half of them were landowners because Selkirk sold much of his land to his settlers.<sup>14</sup> Effectively all the rest had long and relatively generous leases. All were generally content until William Douse was hired to be the land agent in 1833, by Lord Selkirk’s son, and he began to be more rigorous in the collection of rents. For the last half of the 1830s there was considerable conflict between Douse and his Scottish tenants.<sup>15</sup>

Beginning in the late-1820s the Irish (most from County Monaghan) began settling the poorer lands of the interior. The 1841 census listed 157 Irish natives living in Newtown and Iona.<sup>16</sup> They generally did not own their land and in contrast to the Scottish were often given only 21-year leases, at higher rates than usual, by Mr Douse.<sup>17</sup> The 1841 census noted that some of the 999 year leases on the Selkirk lands were reduced to 21 years in 1840, and the rents “unaccountably” raised. The Irish saw this as “a way to shut off the inflow of new Irish immigrants while simultaneously protecting the clannish interests of long-settled Scottish tenants,”<sup>18</sup> who were unaffected by Douse’s raising of rents and drastic

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<sup>13</sup> About 300 South Uist Catholics also came on Selkirk’s three ships but they settled in other parts of the Island, most on Lot 53.

<sup>14</sup> For more on Lord Selkirk and his enlightened landlord policies, see J. M. Bumsted “Lord Selkirk of Prince Edward Island.” *Island Magazine* 5 (Fall/Winter 1978): 3-8.

<sup>15</sup> On which see the discussion on Douse below.

<sup>16</sup> Father Arthur O’Shea, “The Irish in Belfast,” in Eliza Gillis, Viola Gillis and Linda Jean Nicholson MacKenzie, *The Past Is Before Us* (Belfast, P.E.I.: Belfast Historical Society, 2002), 9-10.

<sup>17</sup> O’Grady, 222, 224. An examination of the 1848 census confirms O’Grady’s assertion, as do Dalziel’s and MacLean’s charges against Douse in 1842 (p 126).

<sup>18</sup> O’Grady 223. There are also copious references to Douse’s short term leases among the Irish in the debates on the 1846 and 1847 elections.

shortening of leases. Douse's discriminatory policy seems to have been motivated by his desire to both rid his constituency of "anti-landlord rabble rousers" and to appease the Scottish Presbyterians who might have felt threatened by these Irish 'invaders.'<sup>19</sup>

At the time of the Riot the electoral district was 59% Presbyterian, 16% other Protestant and 25% Catholic. The four Selkirk lots were 84% Presbyterian and 13% Catholic. According to the 1881 census<sup>20</sup> the area ethnically was about 65% Scottish, 19% Irish and 16% other. In the four Selkirk lots 80% were Scots and 13% Irish, though the figure for the Scots here is probably a little lower than it would have been in 1848. Comparing the ethnic and religious data of the 1841, 1848 and 1881 censuses leads to the following inescapable conclusions. With few if any exceptions all the Irish were Catholic, and all the Scots in lots 58, 60 and 62 were Presbyterian. About 85% of the Scots in lot 57 were Presbyterian but less than 60% were in lots 49 and 50. A substantial proportion of the Scots in these three ridings must have been Catholic but some were no doubt part of other Protestant denominations as well. The English in the six districts seem to be primarily Anglican and Methodist. Though the two main cultural groupings, the Scottish Presbyterians and the Irish Catholics, lived in close proximity to each other, O'Grady was no doubt right when he said the Irish lived "alongside rather than among the Scots, and neighbourly relations were guardedly tolerant rather than warmly harmonious."<sup>21</sup>

In the mid-1800s party structure on P.E.I. was just beginning to be clearly formed. By 1846 there were two fairly distinct parties. The Conservatives or Tories, also known as the Family Compact Party, and formerly termed the Cabal, were the party of the

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<sup>19</sup> O'Grady 223.

<sup>20</sup> As the pre-Confederation censuses compute ethnicity only by place of birth the 1881 census is probably the best guide for ethnic breakdown. Immigration to the Belfast area would have been but a trickle after 1847, and as the religious data in the censuses of 1841, 1848 and 1881 show but negligible change in denominational percentages, it seems safe to infer there was likewise little significant change in the ethnic percentages.

<sup>21</sup> O'Grady 206.



establishment. The Reform Party, soon to be re-named the Liberal Party, were rooted in William Cooper's Escheat party of the 1830s, and were the party which advocated land reform and responsible government. It must be kept in mind, however, that at this time each member of the House of Assembly did not always vote the party line.

The challengers in the 1846 election in 3rd Queens were from the Reform Party. John MacDougall was a Scottish, Presbyterian farmer from the area, while John Little (1820-64), was a young lawyer from Charlottetown, "a devout Catholic, an ardent Irishman, . . . and a convinced Reformer."<sup>22</sup> Little was not nominated until the third day of voting. On the first day of voting John LeLacheur (the Reform candidate in 3rd Kings) received 96 votes that were later annulled. The incumbents were Tories Alexander MacLean and William Douse (1800-64). The former was a local Scottish, Presbyterian farmer. In 1836 he had put forward the first motion at a land reform meeting that was decidedly anti-Douse<sup>23</sup> but by 1842 he was Douse's running mate. Even so, in 1843 he sided with the Reformers against Douse on land issues.<sup>24</sup> These four candidates in the 1846 election all re-offered their candidature in the 1847 by-election.

Neither MacDougall, Little nor MacLean were ever accused, in any way, of inciting the riots of 1846 and 1847, but the same cannot be said for William Douse.<sup>25</sup> He was an Anglican who had emigrated from England in 1822, and lived in Charlottetown. He was a businessman, politician and, beginning in 1833, the land agent for Selkirk's 80,000 acres in the greater Belfast area, and 60,000+ acres elsewhere, the second largest estate on P.E.I.

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<sup>22</sup> O'Grady, 216. O'Grady has an excellent overview of his life but overplays his role in the elections (as did Whelan, see p 158). Note the Scottish historians often give Little's name as Small, which seems to be sourced in MacQueen.

<sup>23</sup> See p 160, n 37.

<sup>24</sup> See JHA 1843, pp 91 ('Squatter's' Bill) and 111 (a bill to remit rent arrears for tenants and secure fair leases). Also his quote in the next section.

<sup>25</sup> The most thorough collection of primary materials in relation to Douse was put together by his descendant Vic Douse. It is a 28 page term paper entitled "The Life and Political Career of William Douse" (Nov 28, 1990) and is in the author's possession.



He was a fearsome man, weighing over 300 pounds,<sup>26</sup> and a somewhat larger than life figure as manifested in his daring sea rescue of twelve British sailors in the fall of 1847.<sup>27</sup> In his electoral pursuits he was often accused of using both the intimidation tactics favoured by proprietors and land agents (the threat of the rent roll and ledger), and those practised by their less influential opponents (the use of sticks).

He narrowly won the last of four seats available in Queen's County in the election of 1834, just ahead of Coun Douly Rankin<sup>28</sup> of the pro land reform Escheat Party. Rankin petitioned that this election be overthrown because of irregularities at the poll in Pinette. Rum and sticks were prevalent and fights broke out between Rankin and Douse's supporters within 20 yards of the hustings. A number of people were injured and some were prevented from voting. It was the Irish from Newtown who initiated the rioting, but surprisingly they were acting "in Mr. Douse's interest."<sup>29</sup> The petition was declared "frivolous and vexatious" by a 10-4 vote.

From 1836-8 the Belfast Scots actively opposed Douse's land policies and advocated for the Irish tenants, such that by the fall of 1837 Douse said rent collection was nearly impossible in the Belfast area and he even feared for his safety.<sup>30</sup> "Later, in March 1838, Douse's attempt to evict rent-withholders was met with an assemblage of people

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<sup>26</sup> A political opponent, Archibald MacNeil, dubbed him "the fat agent" (Examiner, July 17, 1850).

<sup>27</sup> Nicolas De Jong, "Charlottetown's Good Samaritan of the Deep," Island Magazine 21 (Spring/Summer 1987): 24-26. The original account of this rescue is in the Royal Gazette, January 11, 1848.

<sup>28</sup> For his biography see DCB, vol 8, s.v. "Rankin, Coun Douly," by Kenneth MacKinnon, 742.

<sup>29</sup> Royal Gazette, Feb 10, 1834.

<sup>30</sup> For more detail see Rusty Bitterman, "Escheat: Rural Protest on Prince Edward Island, 1832-42" (UNB, 1991), 297-304. Douse's circular to his tenants, who went on a rent strike in the fall of 1837, can be found in PARO RG 3466, MF-81-150.339.

armed with pitchforks and bludgeons.”<sup>31</sup> There were two incidents of vandalism against his property in the Belfast District, in 1836 and 1841, most likely perpetrated by his Scottish tenants.<sup>32</sup> Given this background it is no surprise that Douse decided not to run in the 1838 election (easily won by the Escheat Party 18-6), and that he lost a by-election in 1840.

As noted above Land Agent Douse, around 1840, established policies that seemed intentionally designed to be discriminatory to his Irish Catholic tenants. A verbal battle erupted between Douse and Dalziel (the Reform member from 3rd Kings) in the first legislative session after the 1842 election, over this new policy of giving 21 year leases to his Irish tenants. Even Alexander MacLean rebuked Douse:

He thought he knew Belfast as well as his honorable colleague, and his opinion was, that the only way to make the tenantry contented was, to give them good terms; if he [Douse] did so he would find them good tenants, but until then, he would find them discontented. How can it be expected that contentment can prevail under such iniquitous terms as a lease of 21 years . . . ?<sup>33</sup>

MacLean's words would prove prophetic.

Douse was returned to power in the Tory landslide (17-7) of 1842 but lost again in the election of 1846. He and MacLean were acclaimed in the by-election of 1847 and after that he won six straight elections. In the 1850 Reform sweep Benjamin Davies (a reformer) won 3rd Queens with 672 votes, but Douse easily outdistanced the other Reform candidate John MacDougall (651-197). In a by-election that summer Douse defeated his Reform opponent, Archibald MacNeil, 327-179, even though MacNeil took lots 49 and 50 by a 172-38 margin. MacNeil's seven votes in the Selkirk ridings, one surmises, were perhaps a 'tad insufficient.' "Another 'disgraceful row' occurred at this election when a supporter of William Douse splintered a cane on the head of a political opponent at a rally near the Lot

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<sup>31</sup> DCB, "Rankin," 742. By 1839 Selkirk's attorney's had Rankin removed from his Point Prim farm.

<sup>32</sup> See O'Grady, 221-2, also 211 and 223. Also DCB, vol 9, s.v. "William Douse" by H.T. Holman.

<sup>33</sup> Royal Gazette, Mar 14 & Apr 25 (Supplement), 1843.

48 ferry.”<sup>34</sup> MacNeil protested this election on the grounds of “bribery and intimidation,” arguing that Douse intimidated tenants with the rent roll and bribed freeholders with turnip seeds.<sup>35</sup> He died on February 5, 1864.<sup>36</sup>

### The 1846 Election and Riot

A brief word must be said about the nature of elections on the Island at this time. Every one voted for two candidates, there was no secret ballot, and the vote would often take place over several days. At the hustings, essentially a temporary platform placed on sawhorses where the voting took place, the candidates would be nominated and then state their case to the electorate, and even engage in debate with them. They would also provide rum for their supporters after they voted, and their scrutineers would keep a running tally of the open balloting. In a close race groups would go from poll to poll to intimidate the other side, sometimes carrying sticks. There was also often intimidation from the land owners and agents to the effect that if the people did not vote ‘properly’ their rents and /or debts would soon be due. All this was considered a normal part of the democratic process, a manly way to vote.<sup>37</sup>

This manly way of voting was exhibited frequently in the 1846 general election, which began on August 10. It was exhibited in the impassioned debates on the hustings in

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<sup>34</sup> O’Grady 210. Original source not given.

<sup>35</sup> I will argue below (p 153) that the cause of this great discrepancy in the voting patterns inside and outside the Belfast ridings is due primarily to another factor altogether. For information on this by-election see the Examiner (Apr 25; June 15,22; July 3,17, 1850), and the Islander of July 5, 1850.

<sup>36</sup> His obituary is in the Examiner, Feb 8, 1864.

<sup>37</sup> For over a dozen examples of election violence on the Island see O’Grady, 210-12; Andrew Robb, “Rioting in 19th Century P.E.I.”; Edward MacDonald, “It Assumed the Form of an Epidemic,” Island Magazine 53 (Spring/Summer 2003): 16-24; and the speeches in the House of Rae, LeLacheur and Coles (Royal Gazette, Mar 2, 1847 and the Islander, Mar 12, 19, 1846).

1st Prince, between hated landlord James Yeo and some voters;<sup>38</sup> in 1st Queens in “the strongly organized, and, to the last, determined opposition to [George Coles] term”;<sup>39</sup> and most vividly in the hotly contested election in 3rd Kings, won by the outspoken Reformer John LeLacheur, and unsuccessfully contested (losing by a 12-8 margin). Still the riot in 3rd Queens had even more drama than any of these. The following is an extremely brief summary of the key aspects of this event.<sup>40</sup>

The Reformers won both seats in 3rd Queens, but only after much violence had occurred. Monday started with vicious mudslinging between Douse and the Monaghans initiated by Justice of the Peace John Roach Bourke (he was also a losing Reform candidate in the 1842 election), and concluded with Douse’s parting remark to the Monaghan men that “they would be glad to eat ‘humble pudding’ with him yet.”<sup>41</sup> When the Irish had asked Douse for longer leases, “he abused them in the foulest epithets – called them ‘scoundrels,’ and other opprobrious names; and even leaped off the hustings and challenged them to a fight.”<sup>42</sup> Fellow Tory Dr James Herron Conroy referred to Douse as a “petty tyrant” who “lorded it over the tenantry,” and said:

He, poor man! puffed up in all the pride and pomp of “a little brief authority,” descended from the hustings, and threatened the voters with the awful thunder of the artillery of his delegated Rent Roll. . . . and disdaining to its utmost extent his portly person, even challenged these “Irish rascals” to fight.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Islander, August 28, 1846.

<sup>39</sup> Islander, Aug 21, 1846. See also Coles’ speech (Royal Gazette, Mar 2, 1847) and a letter in the Islander, Nov 13, 1846. There was also “hooliganism” in his subsequent by-election win of May 8, after which three Liberal leaders (Coles, Whelan and Mooney), along with some others, were charged with “incitement to Riot.” They were all acquitted (see Royal Gazette, May 11, 1847, July 6, 1847; Islander, May 14, 1847; Examiner, Jan 8-29, 1848).

<sup>40</sup> See the Bibliography for a complete listing of primary source material for the 1846 elections in 3rd Kings and 3rd Queens.

<sup>41</sup> Royal Gazette, Mar 6, 1847.

<sup>42</sup> Royal Gazette, Mar 6, 1847.

<sup>43</sup> Royal Gazette, Mar 2, 1847. Douse’s violence also met with the opprobrium of other Tory teammates, including Hugh MacDonald.

When Douse and MacLean's supporters began to vote they "were most shamefully maltreated and abused . . . by Bourke and Gill's party."<sup>44</sup> According to the *Indictment for Riot and Assault* against Bourke, *et al*, the Irish, "With sticks, staves, and other offensive weapons . . . for the space of one hour and more . . . riotously and tumultuously assembled together . . . [to] hinder oppose and stop . . . [those] desirous to vote for . . . William Douse."<sup>45</sup>

The third day of voting took place at Cherry Valley on Friday, August 14, and it is then that John Little entered the race, with the strong advocacy of Bourke.<sup>46</sup> On the morning of the voting there were large groups of armed supporters for both parties. The Monaghan Irish were there with bludgeons,<sup>47</sup> while Douse had gathered "his unfortunate tenantry, trembling around him," which seemed to include not only Scots but also "some Monaghan tenants coerced to be there by their land agent."<sup>48</sup> They too "were as well armed with 'bludgeon sticks' as were the 'Monaghan Irish' themselves."<sup>49</sup> Later in the day 40-50 men from Belfast (30 being on horses, and therefore dubbed in the Legislature as the "Belfast Militia"), headed by two magistrates, came "armed with whips and sticks,"<sup>50</sup> but the Irish drove them away.

There were at least eight skirmishes on Monday and Friday. About a dozen people seem to have been mildly injured. One man had his skull cracked, another was strangled, quite a number were knocked down, and one old man was attacked by four Irishmen on the

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<sup>44</sup> *Islander*, Aug 28, 1846, p 3. Letter from an unknown supporter of Douse, written Aug 18, with an introduction by Douse.

<sup>45</sup> Queen vs John Roach Bourke & ors., *Indictment for Riot and Assault*, Jan 1847, PARO RG 6.

<sup>46</sup> *Royal Gazette*, March 6, 1847.

<sup>47</sup> *Islander*, Aug 28, 1846.

<sup>48</sup> *Royal Gazette*, Mar 6, 1847.

<sup>49</sup> *Islander*, Aug 28, 1846.

<sup>50</sup> *Royal Gazette*, Mar 6, 1847.

hustings itself. Still no permanent damage seems to have been done, and as one Reformer argued in defence of not overturning the election: “Amidst all the hard blows, of which they complain – [they] cannot bring forward a drop of blood.”<sup>51</sup> Friday saw the greatest potential for serious rioting, with both sides prepared and armed, but in actuality saw less fighting than Monday. As for intimidation, even Little conceded that one individual (Norman MacRae<sup>52</sup>) was chased from the hustings, and certainly the “Belfast Militia” was as well, though the charge that some of those intimidated were glad not to vote is probably well founded.

### Irish Grievances

The main thing that the Irish were upset about in this election was the land issue, particularly Douse’s harsh treatment of his Irish tenants.<sup>53</sup> In the fall of 1846 public meetings were held in Lot 49 and Newtown, both attended by Little and MacDougall, and one resolution from these meetings specifically condemned the new practice of short term leases while another affirmed that “neither peace nor prosperity can be expected to prevail in this Island” until the farmers own their land.<sup>54</sup> On February 4, 1847, Little presented a petition from the people of 3rd Queens praying that if people were ejected from their lands then they should be fairly compensated for improvements.<sup>55</sup> The speeches by Reformers in the House over Douse’s petition to annul the election were replete with this theme.<sup>56</sup> John

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<sup>51</sup> Royal Gazette, Mar 2, 1847, speech by Mooney.

<sup>52</sup> Royal Gazette, Mar 6, 1847.

<sup>53</sup> See, for example: MacDougall’s ads in the Royal Gazette, Aug 4, 1846, and Feb 16, 1847; and Archibald MacNeil’s letter in the Islander, Aug 28, 1846.

<sup>54</sup> Islander, Nov 13, 1846.

<sup>55</sup> JHA, 1847.

<sup>56</sup> Royal Gazette, Mar 2, 1847. See also the speeches of LeLacheur, Whelan, Mooney, and even the Irish Tory Dr Conroy. O’Grady quotes a good sample of these on pp 226-9.

Macintosh argued the root of the problem was “the system of land holding which enables some persons to intimidate quite as effectually, and more so, than with the stick or the bludgeon,” while Coles boldly proclaimed that “if the House are determined, to . . . put down clubs . . . let them also put down the influence of the Rent Roll and Ledger.”

Even so the religious / ethnic issue was also definitely at play among the Irish. The Reformer Alexander Rae summarized the contest as “a war of words and bitter national reflections,”<sup>57</sup> while the Reformer Archibald MacNeil<sup>58</sup> and the Tory Joseph Pope claimed that land was not the only issue in the campaign but also “that Mr. Douse would not give them a piece of ground for a chapel.”<sup>59</sup> Douse also spoke of “my Protestant friends.”<sup>60</sup> While there is no question that the main issue which motivated the Irish to use force at the elections was Douse’s discriminatory land policies, there is also no doubt that longstanding religious and ethnic animosities and the current expression of them in the Belfast area were also significant, albeit lesser, motivating factors for the Irish.

### Evaluation of Election Results

A careful analysis of Douse’s electoral career<sup>61</sup> shows that up until 1847 Douse was not particularly popular even among his Scottish tenants. In the 1834 election Scottish reformers in Pinette violently clashed with Douse’s Irish supporters from Newtown, and Douse lost the riding in 1840 and 1846. Tory Speaker, Joseph Pope, said of the latter election that Douse did not protest the results on Monday due to the violence but because he “saw, the people in that section of the [Belfast] District, were not disposed to support

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<sup>57</sup> Royal Gazette, Mar 2, 1847.

<sup>58</sup> Islander, Aug 28, 1846.

<sup>59</sup> Royal Gazette, Feb 23, 1847. The quote here includes corrected portions from an errata notice in the Mar 2 issue.

<sup>60</sup> Islander, Aug 28, 1846.

<sup>61</sup> See pp 125- 127 for details.

him, and therefore he hastened to put an end to the polling there.”<sup>62</sup> This is a fair assessment for in Pinette the Reformers out-pollled the Tories by a 2-1 margin. Then Little, who did not enter the fray until the third day of voting, defeated both Douse and MacLean. Douse won only two of his first four election campaigns and if he had run in 1838 would undoubtedly have only won two out of five.

So there was a history of a significant minority or perhaps majority of Scottish Presbyterians who did not support Douse, which is at variance with the common understanding that in these elections people voted according to their faith.<sup>63</sup> It would seem, however, that while most of the Catholics did vote Reform<sup>64</sup> many Scottish Protestants did as well; it could not be otherwise for they made up about 60% of the population in the district. This should come as no surprise when one considers the Reforming spirit of perhaps the greatest and most loved Belfast Scot of all, Dr Angus MacAulay. He was a member of the Loyal Electors and advocate for Reform in the House from 1806 until his death in 1827,<sup>65</sup> and was consistently supported by the Scottish Presbyterians of Belfast. Even as late as March 10, 1847, two petitions were submitted from the Belfast area praying for measures whereby tenants could purchase their land at reasonable rates.<sup>66</sup> Douse, in fact, did not become a fixture in this riding until after 1847, the significance of which we will discuss below.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Royal Gazette, Feb 23, 1847.

<sup>63</sup> See, for example, MacMillan, 1835-91, p 69; Champion (p 158 below).

<sup>64</sup> See I.R. Robertson, “Highlanders,” 233, on how Catholics tended to vote Reform.

<sup>65</sup> For more on MacAulay see p 71; DCB, vol 6, s.v. “Angus MacAulay,” by J.M. Bumsted, 412-415; MacQueen, 124-5; and O’Grady, 219, 222.

<sup>66</sup> JHA, 1847.

<sup>67</sup> See p 153.



### The Petition to Overturn the Election

On January 28, 1847, the Tory losers petitioned to have the election declared void. Evidence was heard from February 3-13. The petitioner's lawyer essentially argued that the evidence would prove there was not just "that ordinary excitement and tumult which will more or less prevail at elections" but that there was "riot and tumult."<sup>68</sup> John Little, who served as the lawyer for the defence, admitted there was some violence but also noted how often blood was spilt at elections,<sup>69</sup> and concluded that a protest was resorted to by Douse and MacLean not because of any significant riot but because they knew they could not win "because they were not the object of the people's choice."<sup>70</sup> The matter was then thoroughly debated in Committee and the House. The reporter for the Islander noted that "the utmost diligence is shewn by honourable members to get through the case, and the House sits to a late hour every night. Much public interest appears to be evinced in the pending queries, and the number of persons who now attend the House is unusually great."<sup>71</sup>

Three motions were put forward in Committee and then repeated in the House, and essentially all were carried by an 11-10 vote, most supporting the party line.<sup>72</sup> Bumsted's conclusion that the three votes in regard to Douse's petition were dealt with "along strict factional lines" is a bit simplistic, as is his assessment that "the return of Douse and

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<sup>68</sup> Royal Gazette, Feb 23, 1847.

<sup>69</sup> This was not empty rhetoric. The elections of 1842 and 1843 in Newcastle, New Brunswick, were known as the "fighting elections." The former saw violence in five of its nine days and was re-held, but the latter "saw riots, bloodshed, the death of one man, and the arrival of troops" and yet was not annulled (DCB, vol 8, "Alexander Rankin," by William A Spray, 739; W.A. Spray, "The 1842 Election in Northumberland County," Acadiensis, 8 [Autumn 1978]: 97-100). For Island examples see p 127, n 37.

<sup>70</sup> Royal Gazette, Mar 6, 1847.

<sup>71</sup> Islander, Feb 12, 1847.

<sup>72</sup> Royal Gazette, Feb 2, 1847, p 3, has a full summary of these votes.

MacLean would allow the . . . conservative . . . group to control the House.”<sup>73</sup> In fact in all five contested elections in 1847 and 1848 (3rd Queens, 3rd Kings, 1st Prince, and the two for Coles’s seat in 1st Queens) one or more members did not support the party line, and specifically, in the vote for 3rd Queens, four “soft” Reformers” voted against Little and MacDougall. Neither did Douse and MacLean’s return give the Tories control in the House, for in the first vote they participated in, on the evening of their March 19 by-election victory, the Tories lost a vote on responsible government 12-10. In spite of these caveats, however, it is still true that the by-election of March 1, 1847, was particularly relevant to both parties because it would definitely affect the balance of power in the House.

During the debate regarding annulling the 3rd Kings election two Tories delivered troubling prophecies that would soon be fulfilled. Edward Palmer warned of the danger that “we shall witness here the same butcheries as once occurred in Newfoundland” and ominously asked: “Do hon. gentlemen wish to avoid declaring an election invalid until some man is positively murdered?”<sup>74</sup> Francis Longworth was even more to the point:

If we now say that we will pass over those acts of brutal violence . . . who is to blame if in future similar outrages occur? An election is about to take place at Belfast, and if similar scenes should occur there, will it not be said that we are to blame for them?<sup>75</sup>

In the end the 1846 election in 3rd Queens was declared “a void election” and on February 16 a by-election was called for March 1, 1847, in Pinette Mills, setting the stage for P.E.I.’s most devastating riot.

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<sup>73</sup> Bumsted, “Parliamentary Privilege,” 18.

<sup>74</sup> Royal Gazette, March 16 (extra), 1847.

<sup>75</sup> Islander, Mar 12, 1847.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE 1847 RIOT

#### Prequel

Trouble was expected, both by the local community and the governing officials in Charlottetown. Eight days prior to the election the Roman Catholic priest from Vernon River, Father James Brady, paid a visit to the Presbyterian minister at Belfast, the Rev John MacLennan,<sup>1</sup> whose church was just a few hundred yards from the hustings. Following this both “admonished their respective flocks to exercise forbearance and observe the law.”<sup>2</sup> Community leaders from Belfast also made a request to Sheriff William Cundall that he specifically attend.<sup>3</sup> The House was fully aware of the potential for violence. About two weeks prior to the riot Reform member Rae asked the Tory Palmer whether the Sheriff was being given money for the March 1 election, “As to the employment of special constables; or of such measures as were necessary to preserve the peace.” Palmer agreed with his concern and “was apprehensive that without such aid, the returning officer would not be able to discharge his duty.” Warburton also recommended that the House fund such aid, but ominously “no motion was made.”<sup>4</sup>

Sheriff Cundall did, however, take some precautions. He assigned an experienced

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<sup>1</sup> “The Belfast Riot” song.

<sup>2</sup> MacQueen 112.

<sup>3</sup> “Report of Sheriff Cundall, Mar 2, 1847.” All references to this official report can be found in JHA, 1847.

<sup>4</sup> Islander, Mar 12, 1847.

returning officer, John C. Binns, to run the election, and attended himself. Rae, however, felt this to be inadequate: "On the day of election, I was surprised and disappointed to find that no preparation had been made, the more so, as along the road [presumably on his way from Charlottetown to Pinette] I gathered that the feelings of both sides were roused. . . ."<sup>5</sup> Nothing on the scale of what subsequently happened, however, was anticipated by anybody.

### Phase One

The election took place at Pinette Mills. It was a "very fine day, slight frost last night, sun warm. Evening dull."<sup>6</sup> The polls opened at 11:00 A.M. After the candidates had been sworn in Douse made an attempt to address the crowd, but upon seeing their "manner towards me . . . I declined doing so."<sup>7</sup> He said the same "lawless mob" that had opposed him in the 1846 election were there in front of the hustings, "each armed with a stick." Most of these Irishmen were from County Monaghan and all were Reform supporters. Many had come by sleigh and many were from outside the riding (in fact the two Irish lads who were killed were not only from Lot 66, outside the voting district, but were also too young to vote). They were not likely intent on killing but simply on practising some of the 'muscular persuasion' often used in close Island elections.

When Sheriff Cundall arrived at 11:30 he witnessed "a great deal of angry feeling [being] displayed by some parties in front of the hustings, yet no breach of the peace, that I was aware of, took place until a quarter after twelve." An Irish report said this commotion

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<sup>5</sup> Examiner, Sept 25, 1847.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Hodgson, handwritten note (s.v. March) in his copy of The Prince Edward Island Calendar, 1847, PARO RG 2353/341. Hodgson, the coroner at the Inquest on March 2, surprisingly made no reference to the riot.

<sup>7</sup> "Information of Witnesses on Malcolm Macrae, Mar 3, 5, 1847," PARO Record Group 6.1, File 201. Douse, MacLean and Dr Alexander MacGregor testified on Mar 2 (not Mar 3), while Alexander MacDougall, Kenneth Matheson, Richard Gill and Dugald McIsaac gave their testimony on the 5th. All non-cited quotes in the section on phase one come from this source, except those of Sheriff Cundall which are from his Official Report.

was all centered on Douse who infuriated the Irish “with religious prejudices,” and even maltreated and assaulted some “who had constitutionally opposed him.”<sup>8</sup> A group of about thirty Scotsmen, supporting the Tory candidates, were the first to vote. One of these, Malcolm MacRae (age forty-four), probably voted just after noon time. Though the Scots clearly had not prepared as the Irish had, they do seem to have come to the hustings with even more than the usual vigour associated with a contested election, and at least some had sticks.

It was clear that trouble might ensue so Binns and Cundall sent Magistrate Allan MacDougall to get two constables. While in search of the second he saw Donald Stewart being struck down by an Irishman, and then chased by a group of them. While trying to help Stewart, MacDougall himself was attacked:

On getting on the road I was struck from behind. I looked behind and saw a party in chase of me with sticks. I thought it best to continue on the road and run in the direction the Scotchman [Stewart] took chased by the Irish. I had not proceeded far on the road when I met some of the Irish returning back and as I passed they struck me. I then met a number and was knocked down & placed my hands over my head thinking I should be murdered. They continued beating me. Some said he has got enough others said he is dead & some said strike away.

MacLean witnessed this beating as well, saying he observed three men pursuing Mr MacDougall with sticks, and that while down he “endeavoured to protect his head by thrusting it under the snow.” Both Mr Haszard and Mr Bourke were struck when they went to assist the victim. Donald Gillis was also attacked by three or four Irishmen and they “tore the scalp off one side of his head down over his ear and nearly killed him.”<sup>9</sup>

The Irish by this time were becoming “very riotous” and “took possession of the front of the hustings and drove our people off” (MacLean). Cundall said this occurred

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<sup>8</sup> Part of resolution # 2 at a meeting in Vernon River, July 12, 1847. Reported in the Examiner Aug 14, 1847.

<sup>9</sup> “Belfast, P.E. Island, no II,” Presbyterian and Evangelical Protestant Union, Feb 15, 1877. See also MacLean and Gill’s testimony at the Inquest.

about 12:15, and claimed it was according to a predetermined plan by the Irish. As the Scots fled the Irish followed in pursuit. Sheriff Cundall made the general remark that: "Several persons armed with sticks were chasing individuals; these were in general thrown down and then beaten severely . . . and . . . left on the ground to bleed." This included the MacDougall brothers "and a great many others."

During this melee MacRae was attacked. Shortly after he left the hustings a man came after him and struck him "on the left side of the head" (Matheson). A group of about five Irishmen started to follow him. Douse testified that:

I saw one of these men strike a very violent blow on the head of the person they were in pursuit of, he fell instantaneously. Then I observed Patrick O'Connell strike a very heavy blow while the man was down and the whole 5 were beating him. O'Connell was the first to strike after the man fell. The man appeared to me to be murdered.

The five witnesses who saw the attack on MacRae agreed that it was about five men who chased him, they struck him on the head with sticks, and they repeatedly hit him while he was down. No one, however, could identify any of the five men except for Douse, who was quite certain O'Connell was among them and perhaps Patrick Brennick as well. Bourke and MacLean both considered going to aid MacRae but deemed their own lives in danger if they did so.

Douse had been standing on top of the hustings until a group of Irishmen came up "asking for Douse, armed with sticks" (MacLean). One of these was Patrick O'Connell, who according to MacLean, had "a stick in his hand, [and] blood on his hands and on the stick." The election officials, MacLean and a few of the Scottish electors had formed a blockade around Douse, while Douse hid behind them "on the hustings in a stooping position fearing that they would do to me some injury."

MacRae meanwhile had been left for dead in James Buchanan's field but nearly an hour after his beating slowly got up from where he lay and started making his way towards

the Rev John MacLennan's house. McIsaac saw him at this time and commented: "I did not think he was seriously hurt. I did not see blood on him." Dr MacGregor, who cared for him at the manse initially felt the same way: "When I first saw him I did not think he was as much injured as some of the others but when I examined him I found no symptom of concussion but of compression that was rapidly increasing & discovered a fracture." He died around 8:00 pm of a fractured skull.<sup>10</sup> The first part of the conflict ended with the Irish in control of the hustings.

### Phase Two

Sheriff Cundall halted the voting for 15 minutes and swore in seven deputies, after which they re-opened the poll and the Irish contingent started to vote. "The Scotch . . . retired to a distant grove and provided themselves with sticks."<sup>11</sup> MacQueen then picks up the story:

The indignation of the Scottish relatives and neighbours of MacRae was extreme. Their Highland passion could not be controlled. They determined at once to avenge this wanton and lawless attack. Couriers on horseback were sent along the road to warn the settlers.<sup>12</sup> "Young" John MacLennan spent the forenoon feverishly preparing sticks with which to arm the Scots. By noon [actually 2:30 according to Sheriff Cundall's report] about 200 had assembled and were armed. A scarf was tied across the shoulder of each to distinguish friend from foe. Thus prepared they lined up near the polling booth. Opposite stood about three hundred similarly armed Irish. . . .<sup>13</sup>

These Scots were mostly from Pinette and Flat River. Both sides were armed with sticks.

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<sup>10</sup> The eight hours comes from the inquest on Mar 2, 1847.

<sup>11</sup> "Belfast, P.E."

<sup>12</sup> Stanley Bruce shared the tradition passed down in his family that his great grandfather joined in after someone had "sent word for people to come." He was mildly hurt in the fray and did not return home for several days (Stanley Bruce of Heatherdale, P.E.I., interview by author, Nov 25, 2005).

<sup>13</sup> MacQueen 113. In his 1861 history Presbyterian minister George Sutherland, who undoubtedly had talked at some point with Scottish participants, likewise commented that the Scots "were inflamed at the treatment of McRae who was now evidently dying" (Sutherland 125).

The Scottish combatants arranged themselves in a line on James Buchanan's field<sup>14</sup> about 200 yards from the hustings. Between them and the hustings was a similar sized group of Irishman, "Yelling and brandishing their sticks in great excitement."<sup>15</sup> Mr Malone, an Irish Orangeman, served as spokesman for the Highlanders and said there would be no fighting if the Irish would allow the Scots to vote. He was knocked down with an Irish club and the riot was underway. The Sheriff and others had tried to keep the two sides apart but the passions and danger were too high. A riot was proclaimed about 2:30 pm, and all the officials fled for safety.

This phase of the fighting led to the most bloodshed but we know little about it. The best source is a newspaper account from thirty years after the fight.<sup>16</sup> The author was not an eyewitness to the event but the following day heard stories from the people who were. He referred to it as "the celebrated Battle of Belfast." It stated there were about 400 Irishmen "formed into a solid mass," and over 300 Scots,<sup>17</sup> "Formed into three lines of battle – the second about 100 yards behind the first; and the third about as far behind the second. The first line numbered between 60 and 80." The Irish:

Threw stones, brickbats and sticks over the heads of their comrades at the approaching Highlanders. When the Irish and Scotch sticks met, in the opposing front ranks encountering each other, the noise was like that of the simultaneous driving of wedges when a vessel was about to be launched in the olden time.

Up to seventy Irishmen were soon lying scattered on the ground but nearly all the Scots also received some wound or bruise.

After the first onset a Scotsman, seeing so many Irishmen lying on the ground as if

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<sup>14</sup> It is now owned by his great grandson Alan Buchanan and is about a quarter of a mile from the church.

<sup>15</sup> Sheriff Cundall's report.

<sup>16</sup> "Belfast, P.E." The information in this paragraph is from this source unless otherwise noted.

<sup>17</sup> MacQueen said the Scots were outnumbered 300-200, the song boasted 300-100.



dead, stopped the second line of Scots from approaching by warning them that they would all be hanged for murder. Things went back and forth for a while but then the third line of about 200 Scots began to advance. Seeing this the Irish “hastily gave way, dragging off and carrying their wounded, dying, and dead with them to their sleighs, and were soon out of sight leaving the Scotch in possession of the field.” After the battle “the field was as if a number of butchers had been extensively at work” – blood does show up much better on snow after all – and the blood pouring from the wounded actually melted holes in the deep snow. The Belfast Riot song avers that the Irish “fought like tigers ‘till they could fight no longer,” but also that the Scots carried the day -- there seems to be no reason to doubt either tradition. The author of the 1877 account closed with the comment that: “Neighbours and other acquaintances who fought in mortal combat in that struggle, are now in the most intimate friendship on the Island, and often speak of their experiences on that eventful occasion.”

### Casualties

Dead for certain were Malcolm MacRae, James Cain and Michael Mulcahie. The ‘word on the street’ at the time seemed to put the number at five.<sup>18</sup> Scottish tradition has placed it much higher – “The Scots aver that over a dozen Irish were killed on the field, or died shortly after”<sup>19</sup> – but this has never been confirmed. A report in the press of the time claimed the Irish in Newtown were secretly burying their dead. This was sourced in a verbal report by Dr. Hobkirk, a Charlottetown physician who was sent out after the riot to care for the injured, though he later unequivocally denied the ‘rumour’ of secret burials.<sup>20</sup> I

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<sup>18</sup> See Ross quote on p 117.

<sup>19</sup> MacQueen 113.

<sup>20</sup> Royal Gazette, Mar 6, 9, 1847. The ancient Scottish ballad affirms this as well: “Their killed and their wounded they hid out of sight, . . . , and they hauled them away in the dead hours of night.” For Hobkirk’s *curricula vitae* see the Royal Gazette, Dec 18, 1838.

am of two minds in evaluating Hobkirk's comments. Presumably he is the most objective source in this matter, yet the tradition of secret burials originated on the day of the battle (albeit from the enemy's camp) whereas Hobkirk did not make it to the Irish settlements until March 5 or 6. So he is not actually an eyewitness and he may have had reasons to uncritically accept the Irish report he received. Also secret burials were common practice at this time in New Brunswick, especially among the Irish.<sup>21</sup> The truth of this, no doubt, will never be known, and in the end the phrase "at least three dead" probably catches the truth of the event best. The injured were numerous, a minimum of fifty, and "many on each side were so badly injured that they never fully recovered."<sup>22</sup>

### A Sectarian Folk-Song

The author of the Scottish folk song, "The Belfast Riot,"<sup>23</sup> is unknown, but internal evidence leaves no doubt that he was a Scottish Presbyterian. Its date is also unknown. MacQueen in 1929 referred to it as "one of the most popular"<sup>24</sup> of the folk-songs among the Island Scots. Island folklorist John Cousins feels certain it would have been written within months of the event. He said Island folk-songs almost functioned like newspapers, and that "virtually all . . . were written shortly after the event."<sup>25</sup> Its value for our study is both in portraying the deep feelings of distrust some Protestants at the time had for their Catholic

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<sup>21</sup> See, Riots, informs us that secret burials were known of a certitude to have happened in the riots of 1845, 1847 and 1849.

<sup>22</sup> MacQueen 113. He then noted two examples of this. See also Sutherland (1861), p 125.

<sup>23</sup> See Appendix A for the complete poem.

<sup>24</sup> MacQueen p 31.

<sup>25</sup> John Cousins, interview by author, Oct 31, 2005. A good example of this can be found in a parallel event that occurred in Lot 50 in 1865, the "March of the Posse Comitatus." It happened on April 7 and by April 26 two very long poems had been written about it (Ian Ross Robertson, "The Posse Comitatus Incident of 1865," Island Magazine 24 [Fall/Winter 1988]: 3). Another example is the New Brunswick ballad "The Battle of York Point", 1849, Saint John N.B., which is likewise an eyewitness account of a battle that made P.E.I.'s riot look a little 'picnicish' (see p 109). It can be found in See, Riots, Appendix A.

neighbours, and as a primary source (albeit very biased) for what happened on the Scottish side of things on that fateful day.<sup>26</sup>

Anti-Catholic sentiment is rife in the song. In speaking of the number of Irish dead, the song claims in one Irish sleigh alone:

That seven were hauled away dead from the grounds,  
And twenty more went to hell or to Connaught;  
Their graves to this day have never been found.

Connaught was a poor province in Ireland, and the expression “to hell or to Connaught” is borrowed from the famous ultimatum Oliver Cromwell is said to have given the Catholic settlers in Ulster whose land he was confiscating in the mid-1650s. As such it is an extremely nasty turn of phrase. Still, the nastiest bit of business in the song is the charge that the priest of Iona, Father Brady, came eight days before the election to give false assurances to the Presbyterian minister John MacLennan that there would be no fight. It refers to him as “the Irish deceiver,” and “that wolf in sheep’s clothing.” MacLennan “cordially welcomed” him, and on the Sabbath instructed his congregation to keep the peace -- so “being blindfolded no Scotchman prepared.” The priest meanwhile is accused of calling a meeting in Newtown two days before the election:

For to have their sins pardoned and grant them a blessing,  
The mark of the beast stamped on every face.

It is also claimed that he blessed and sprinkled holy water on the weapon of each Irishman. The Irish then marched off, promising to burn a twenty pound candle each year to the “Holy Virgin” if she granted them victory.

The song is thus an excellent example of the fear, distrust and animosity that a significant number of Scottish Protestants had towards Catholics in the mid-1800s, but does it have any historical worth? The Scots traditionally have over-valued the song’s historicity.

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<sup>26</sup> The song also reflects much of the original Scottish perspective on the event, and has coloured much of their subsequent portrayal.

MacQueen, with no apparent sense of irony, says “it gives a fairly complete history of that exciting event.”<sup>27</sup> If he, as an historian ‘from away,’ deemed it a “complete history,” then no doubt the common Scot of the district did as well. In contrast the non-Scottish secondary sources completely ignore the song as an historical source, because of its biased perspective. In spite of the blatant biases, I will now argue that the song is a valuable primary source that the historian needs to use judiciously.

The first point regards the historical value of Gaelic folk-songs in general. Eric Cregeen asserts that:

The musical tradition is perhaps the one most fundamental in Scottish life. . . . Songs are crucial to understanding life at all times in the Highlands and Islands, far more so than in England, and are one of the prime sources for the historian, for they mirror the concerns of everyday life - the courtings, weddings, feuds and disasters . . . .<sup>28</sup>

That, in conjunction with the fact that the song is a contemporary report, has led me to conclude that most historians have erred in completely rejecting this eyewitness account because of its bigoted sentiments. This is not to suggest that there is no fabrication or exaggeration in the song. The statements about the Irish machinations in Newtown, their secret plans, meetings and motivations, have to be assumed to be inventions -- for it is impossible to imagine any scenario that would situate any Scotsman at these events or any Irishman later on divulging what happened if they did in fact occur. What it says about events on the Scottish side of things, however, should be regarded as a valuable primary source, even though its intent was not to provide an objective accounting of the event but to glorify the “great and glorious grand victory” of those “brave,” “noble,” “conquering” “sons of Old Scotia.”

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<sup>27</sup> MacQueen 32.

<sup>28</sup> Eric Cregeen, “Oral Sources for the Social History of the Scottish Highlands and Islands,” Oral History: The Journal of the Oral History Society, Vol II, No 2 (Autumn 1974), 23-4, cited in Kennedy 39.

In light of all this I have treated the song's testimony to events on the Scottish side as an eyewitness account and have incorporated many details from it in my recounting of the riot. This includes Father Brady's visit to Rev John MacLennan eight days before the event, the Rev Mr MacLennan on the day before the Riot warning his congregation to "keep peace and order," the Irish coming in sleighs armed with sticks, and the pastor's son ("brave John MacLennan") helping to prepare sticks for the Scottish warriors. As to what it says about Irish plotting and motivations these must be regarded as nothing more than blatant anti-Catholic sentiment. While it is quite probable that Father Brady was in favour of land reform and encouraged his flock to support the Reform Party, there is no evidence to suggest he was an advocate of violence,<sup>29</sup> or that he included sprinkling holy water on Irish weaponry as part of his spiritual ministrations. While the Irish actions were clearly premeditated, their design was not to "murder all Scotchmen" as the song suggests, but just to prevent Douse from being elected. As to hyperbolic exaggeration (reflecting the song's purpose of honouring the Scottish heroes) it is certainly apparent in the claims that "bloodthirsty Irishmen, twenty or more" beat on Malcolm MacRae, that the Scots were outnumbered 300 to 100, and in the number of Irish dead.

The song is thus a valuable primary source for helping us to understand some of what happened on the day of the riot. Much of what it says were historic facts that any Scotsman in the Belfast area at the time would have been aware of, and in spite of the song's partisan nature there is little reason to doubt the essential historicity of its claims which are based on eye-witnesses. At the same time the extreme bias in the song means the historian must carefully sift out the kernel of its historical truths from the chaff of its exaggerated sentiments. Finally, what it says about the Irish plans and schemes must be deemed to be of no evidentiary value at all, for these parts of the song come not from any

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<sup>29</sup> O'Grady 217-8.

eye-witness reports but from the fertile imaginations of the enemy camp.

### Sequel

A new election was held March 19 at Pinette Mills, with about 200 soldiers and special constables guarding the hustings, including the company of the Horse.<sup>30</sup> The Scottish voters carried hidden sticks with them but surrendered them when they saw they were being protected. The Reform members, however, had voluntarily stepped down in order to avoid another conflict,<sup>31</sup> so there were no incidents. After about fifty people had voted for Douse and MacLean, they were declared elected. Both victorious candidates noted the previous violence in their acceptance speeches. MacLean instructed their supporters to “allow those who unjustly insulted you before to always be the aggressors . . . The portion of the inhabitants of this District who joined the strangers against you on the first day of this month are, I should suppose, sorry for such conduct and if such feeling is expressed to you, I am satisfied that you will have good neighbours as heretofore.”<sup>32</sup>

Six Catholics were charged for their part in the 1846 riot in Belfast, and four went to trial.<sup>33</sup> James Burns, Henry Burns and Henry Brennick received sentences of four months, while Bourke was acquitted by a split jury. An *Indictment for Riot and Affray* was laid against twenty-one Catholics in relation to the 1847 riot<sup>34</sup> but only four of them proceeded to trial, and Henry Burns alone was found guilty, for which he received another

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<sup>30</sup> For exact details see the Islander, Mar 19, 1847.

<sup>31</sup> Letter of Mar 24, 1847, by MacDougall, to the Royal Gazette.

<sup>32</sup> Royal Gazette, Mar 30, 1847.

<sup>33</sup> Queen vs John Roach Bourke & ors.

<sup>34</sup> Queen v Patrick Lyons, & ors., *Indictment for Riot and Assault*, July 1847, PARO, Record Group 6.

four months.<sup>35</sup> The most significant trial concerned, of course, the murder of the Scotsman MacRae. Inquests had been held for the three dead men and all concluded, “willful murder by person or persons unknown.”<sup>36</sup> By July, however, charges were laid against Patrick Lyons, Patrick O’Connell and John Clarkin, that they: “Being moved and seduced by the instigation of the devil . . . with a certain stick of no value . . . did strike . . . Malcolm Macrae . . . in and upon the left side of the head . . .”, from which wound he later died.<sup>37</sup> Lyons and O’Connell (I presume Clarkin had fled the province) were tried on July 3-4, 1848. The jury proclaimed both men not guilty.<sup>38</sup>

At a meeting of Irish Catholics in Vernon River on July 12, 1847, a resolution was passed that the investigation of the riot and subsequent judicial proceedings be impartial “among all creeds and parties without distinction.”<sup>39</sup> They were not. No charges were ever laid in relation to the deaths of the two Irish boys and all of the charges, in both riots, were laid solely against Irishmen, which should be taken as further evidence that the balance of power on the Island was definitely tilted in the Protestants’ favour. This was typical of the times as evidenced in trials in New Brunswick in the 1840s.<sup>40</sup> The same thing, however, was at work from the other side in Quebec, as witnessed in the controversial acquittal by an all-Catholic jury of the Catholic murderers of Protestant Robert Corrigan in 1855.

The first obvious political fallout from the Riot was electoral reform. In April 1847 the House ended the practice of holding elections on different days, and increased the

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<sup>35</sup> Supreme Court, Queens County, Minute Books, Jan 29, 1845 - Jan 19, 1850, PARO, microfilm, s.v., Jan 10-29, 1848.

<sup>36</sup> *Islander*, Mar 12, 1847 (cf *Royal Gazette*, June 29, 1847).

<sup>37</sup> Queen vs Patrick Lyons, Patrick O’Connell and John Clarkin, *Indictment for Murder*, July, 1847, PARO, Record Group 6.

<sup>38</sup> Queen vs Patrick Lyons and Patrick O’Connell, *Record of Acquittal of Murder*, July 1848, PARO, Record Group 6.

<sup>39</sup> *Examiner*, Aug 14, 1847.

<sup>40</sup> See p 109.

number of polling stations per district, so that fewer people would be likely to gather at any given poll. In 3rd Queens the number of polls went from two to five, and the one at Pinette Mills was eliminated. It unfortunately did not totally undermine the ‘manly’ system of public voting, for not until 1913 did P.E.I. permanently institute the secret ballot and rum continued for many years to be a mainstay at the hustings.<sup>41</sup>

The second electoral change was less obvious but just as real. Election disturbances continued on P.E.I. but never again on anything approaching this scale. As Edward MacDonald noted: “From out of that tangle of bloody pates and broken limbs, an appalled populace drew one beneficial lesson. Tempers might explode in the future but large-scale violence was eschewed. Verbal fisticuffs was another matter.”<sup>42</sup> Islanders were so horrified by the event that they effectively said this will never happen here again. It affected Islanders the same way the Gordon Riots had affected Londoners.

The first and only newspaper editorial on the Riot said, “The plague spot must not be allowed to spread, nor Club Law to triumph,”<sup>43</sup> and its admonition was heeded. Effectively Islanders stopped the spread not by aggressively rooting out the evil (only one man was sent to jail for his role in the riot) but by covering it over. This is evidenced by what Holman termed “the marked disinclination [of the press] to keep the matter before the public,”<sup>44</sup> the court’s refusal to pursue prosecutions, and in the avoidance of the issue by the House. No public inquiry was ever held, as had been done for the election riots of 1831, “Partly because everyone in the House was so horrified by what had transpired.”<sup>45</sup> Lieutenant Governor Huntley probably set the tone for all this when, in rejecting an Irish

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<sup>41</sup> For more detail on the impact of the Riot on electoral reform see Bumsted, “Parliamentary Privileges,” 18-20.

<sup>42</sup> E. MacDonald, SDU, 59.

<sup>43</sup> Royal Gazette, Mar 6, 1847.

<sup>44</sup> Holman 7.

<sup>45</sup> Bumsted, “Parliamentary Privilege,” 18.



petition to prosecute all the offenders vigorously, said:

Confident in the repentant feelings of the parties implicated, I had hoped a veil would for ever have been thrown over those excesses which at that time plunged the District in mourning, and that a dreadful lesson having been received, all would seek to atone for their errors, by encouraging and practising in all future differences charity and Christian forbearance.<sup>46</sup>

While a veil was thrown over the event, it did not stop the sore underneath from festering, and less than ten years later the two major religious groupings on the Island would be practising anything but Christian charity.

### Conclusion

How bad was the riot really? Many today almost look at the riot with bemusement, but there was nothing funny about it at the time<sup>47</sup> or for many years after. A comparison to election violence in the rest of Canada shows the Belfast Riot to be perhaps the second most serious incident in Canadian electoral history. Prior to 1867 only 23 people were killed during Canadian elections. There was one in Northumberland County, New Brunswick (1843) and one in Saint John, New Brunswick (1866), three in St John's, Newfoundland, in 1861, but none at all in Nova Scotia. The most serious incidents occurred when three men were killed by soldiers on the 22nd day of voting in an 1832 election in Montreal, and nine at various polls in the Province of Canada in 1841.<sup>48</sup> The Belfast Riot was serious business. At least three dead, another half dozen at death's door, at least fifty significantly wounded, 400-500 people beating on each other with clubs all afternoon -- in sum, it was very bad. So much so that Sheriff Cundall felt another contested

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<sup>46</sup> Examiner, Aug 14, 1847. The petition was from the Catholics in Vernon River (see p 153).

<sup>47</sup> See Ross quote on p 117.

<sup>48</sup> Elections Canada, "A History of the Vote in Canada," online article available at <http://www.elections.ca/content.asp?section=gen&document=chap1&dir=his&lang=e&textonly=false>.

election could not be held “without the aid of a strong armed force – perhaps not without the aid of the military.” Another eyewitness, George Coles, said if another election is held soon then “I doubt if all the force which we could send to Belfast would be found effectual in preserving the peace.”<sup>49</sup> In the end it was deemed necessary to send out about 200 soldiers and constables to keep the peace. This was not just another election riot that was a little worse than others. This was a devastating event that changed Island history in regard to Catholic and Protestant relations, as we shall argue below.

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<sup>49</sup> Debate in the House, Mar 13, 1847 (cited in the Royal Gazette, Mar 16, 1847).

## CHAPTER 7

### IMPACT AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RIOTS

#### The Impact of the Riot on the Island

From my limited and informal polling of Islanders it seems that a significant majority have not heard of the Belfast Riot. This was certainly not always the case. Brendan O'Grady told me that "the event has much less significance to Islanders today than when I arrived here fifty years ago."<sup>1</sup> For over a century after the Riot Islanders seemed to have been quite aware of the event; for many Protestants it served as the prime example of why 'one could not really trust those Irish Catholics.'

This was particularly true during the bitter sectarian debates of the early-1860s when Belfast served as the same object lesson of Catholic treachery and danger for Islanders as the Gunpowder Plot and St Bartholemew's Day Massacre had for generations of Englishmen. W. H. Pope<sup>2</sup> offered the retort to Whelan's assertion that Island Catholics were peaceable and free from ambition: "Have you forgotten *Belfast*?"<sup>3</sup> He then commented that he understood Coles had devised a plan to return two (sic) Roman Catholics and "hoped the Protestants would long remember the Catholic aggression at Belfast and they will trust their rights to themselves and not to the liberals." The Protestant of January 18, 1862, also referred to the two (sic) Roman Catholic Reform candidates and

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<sup>1</sup> Brendan O'Grady of Charlottetown, interview by author, Nov 25, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Pope was the editor of the leading Conservative newspaper in the colony (the Islander) from 1859-72, the most powerful figure in the Conservative Party during that period, a Father of Confederation, and the key figure in P.E.I.'s sectarian wars during the 1860s.

<sup>3</sup> Islander, July 26, 1861.

spoke of how the cowardly Irish hid their clubs under their clothes, and then commented: “You have not forgotten Belfast, and I trust you never will.” Later in the year (July 30, 1862) its editorial warned Catholics against any attempt to resort to bloodshed again and recalled the sorrow of “the widow MacRae and her now orphan children.” This harking back to the riot in a time of great social strife, with its historical inaccuracy about both Reformers being Catholic, well illustrates Cohen’s maxim: “Symbols of the ‘past’ . . . attain particular effectiveness during periods of intensive social change when communities have to drop their heaviest cultural anchors in order to resist the currents of transformation.”<sup>4</sup> The Protestants’ heaviest anchor was “the Catholic aggression at Belfast” and it was well used to help resist any changes their ‘enemy’ might be seeking to introduce during the heated sectarian battles of the 1860s.<sup>5</sup>

Even in the Belfast area itself today many people are unaware of this episode of their history. Most of the older people are well acquainted with it but Stanley Bruce felt that most people after his time (he was born in the late-thirties) would have at best but a vague inkling about it, and that the oral tradition effectively ended with his generation.<sup>6</sup> This was confirmed by Hannah Buchanan, who surveyed sixty teenagers in the Belfast Presbyterian church youth group in November 2005.<sup>7</sup> She found only one who had even heard of the Riot and he knew little about it.

Belfast old timers<sup>8</sup> and many Island historians regularly affirm the cordiality of relations between Protestants and Catholics in the area from the time of the Riot to the

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<sup>4</sup> A. P. Cohen, The Symbolic Construction of Community (New York: Tavistock, 1985), 102.

<sup>5</sup> See also the references below (pp 152, 175) to the establishment of the Orange Lodges on the Island as specifically being to provide defence for Protestants against the Catholic aggression as manifested particularly in Belfast.

<sup>6</sup> Stanley Bruce interview.

<sup>7</sup> Buchanan 4.

<sup>8</sup> See Sage 29, Hornby 120, and p 141 above.

present day. Duncan Campbell, for example, in his half page summary of the event in 1875 affirmed that: "There is not now a more peaceful locality in the island than that in which the riot took place; national prejudice and political rancour are lost in kindly fellowship."<sup>9</sup>

While it is true there has never been any other incident of ethnic or religious violence in the area, still, relationships were at best "guardedly tolerant" and seem only rarely to have been full of kindly fellowship and friendship. Certainly in the two decades immediately following the Riot the division between the two communities definitely deepened, as the following realities exhibit.

The first evidence of the deepening divisions comes from the previously noted meeting of Catholics at Vernon River a few months after the riot. They passed the following resolution: "This meeting deplore[s] the melancholy occurrences which have accompanied the recent Belfast Election . . . and regret to witness the infuriated feelings which predominate amidst the inhabitants of a neighbouring locality . . ."<sup>10</sup> Was any other reaction even possible at the time?

Next is the change in attitude among the Scottish Presbyterians of the area to Douse manifested in their voting patterns before and after the election. Writers have tended to generalize regarding Douse's electoral career. Holman, for example, said Douse "with two exceptions won every election he contested until his retirement in 1862."<sup>11</sup> This telescoping of his career, however, hides a most important truth, that Douse did not have the unqualified support of the Belfast Scots until after the 1847 Riot. Prior to 1847 Douse effectively had won only two of five elections, after the riot he won six of six.<sup>12</sup> He easily

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<sup>9</sup> Campbell 113.

<sup>10</sup> Part of resolution # 3 at a meeting in Vernon River, July 12, 1847. Reported in the Examiner Aug 14, 1847. For more on this meeting see pp 136, 147, 171.

<sup>11</sup> DCB, "William Douse." See also O'Grady 214.

<sup>12</sup> See pp 125-127, 131-132 for further details.

won even the two elections in which the Liberal party swept the Island. In the 1850 by-election he received only 20% of the vote in lots 49 and 50, roughly equivalent to the Scots Presbyterian population in the riding, but tallied 98% of the votes in the Selkirk lots. By the time the Bible Question re-emerged in 1856, Belfast, now re-configured as 4th Queens, was the safest Tory riding in the Province. His opponent in the 1850 by-election, Archibald MacNeil, said they voted for Douse because “ejection and ruin would result if they dared to vote against the agent,”<sup>13</sup> and no doubt this played a role among the Irish in the area; but the contrast between this and preceding elections would suggest that what was really at work was the hardening of attitudes among the Scottish Protestants against their Irish Catholic neighbours after the horrific riot of 1847. Just as sides had been drawn during the riot itself, it is no surprise that these had not dissipated during the intervening three years. When one recognizes the scale of the conflict, it is no wonder that it was able to turn even the most reform-minded Scotsman into a supporter of someone like Douse. The Scottish Protestants of Belfast had moved a long way from the reform roots of Dr MacAulay, ample testimony to the dramatic changes that the Riot had worked in their psyches.

The third testimonial to the deepening divisions in the Belfast area can be seen in the growth of Orangeism following the riot. The first Lodge was instituted in Charlottetown in 1851 and by March 1862 there were fifteen lodges on the Island, but the heart of the movement, at least initially, was in the Belfast District. The second lodge was established in Belfast in March 1859 and two months later the Island’s third and fourth (Lot 49 and Woodville) were likewise established in the District. The following year the area’s fourth lodge was begun at Orwell.<sup>14</sup> Protestants of the time were convinced “the immediate cause of the institution of Orange Lodges was the Belfast Riot.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The Examiner, July 3, 1850.

<sup>14</sup> W.H. Spencer, “Loyal Orange Association,” in MacKinnon and Warburton 228-33.

<sup>15</sup> See pp 175f for this complete quote and others like it.

There has certainly been peace on the surface in Belfast but the underlying tensions seem to have continued at least for a good century or more after the riot itself, and to this day have not completely disappeared. It is clear that people in the Belfast District did make sure nothing like the sectarian violence of 1847 would ever happen again in their community, and from the time it happened there were undoubtedly examples of some people on either side being neighbourly and friendly with people on the other side.<sup>16</sup> Still it would be surprising if such an intense battle did not “embitter feelings”<sup>17</sup> between the two groups. The evidence does seem to indicate that it in fact did, even though both groups did learn to accommodate the other. Alan Buchanan said of people in his community: “There appears to be a long-standing, yet unstated agreement, that the subject not be raised in polite conversation between the Scots and the Irish. This deferential memory of the Riot . . . indicates people’s eagerness to defuse a potentially explosive issue . . . .”<sup>18</sup> Even in his own home, the very site of the event, he recalled “the riot wasn’t a common topic.”<sup>19</sup> This was particularly the case with the Belfast Riot Song which Protestants would never sing in the presence of Catholics.<sup>20</sup> This attitude has continued down to the present day, which is well illustrated by the fact that in the Belfast Historical Society’s publication in 2002 of a book entitled The Past Is Before Us there is no reference at all to the riot. The Belfast people seem to have dealt with the issue much the same as the rest of the Island; they made sure that religious and ethnic differences would never lead to such an outcome

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<sup>16</sup> For examples of good relations in the past see MacQueen 57 (Peter Nicholson story), and the letter from D. Fraser of Belfast in the Islander of April 19, 1861.

<sup>17</sup> MacMillan, 1835-91, p 70.

<sup>18</sup> Hornby 4.

<sup>19</sup> Buchanan 4.

<sup>20</sup> Stanley Bruce interview. We know it was sung in some Scottish homes and celidhs (see p 142) in the first century after the riot, but my conversations with Belfast residents suggest most people would not allow it to be sung (nor the riot to be mentioned) even in the privacy of their own homes, and this has especially been the case since the mid-1900s.

again by effectively choosing to ignore the event, particularly in mixed religious company. Its fallout for a good century, however, seems not to have been close fellowship between the two groups, but a silent agreement to abide with and tolerate one another.

In the last two or three decades, however, all this has changed. Today Catholics and Protestants in the Belfast district get along remarkably well. The Rev Roger MacPhee (minister at the Belfast Presbyterian Church since 1987) noted they do things together so often that “it is now just routine.”<sup>21</sup> Father Gerald Tingley (priest at the Catholic churches in Iona and Vernon River), believes that relations between Protestants and Catholics in the area may be better than in any other community on the Island.<sup>22</sup> Neither pastor today is aware of any tensions between the two faith communities.

### Five Interpretive Approaches

Brendan O’Grady writes of the Belfast Riot as “the least understood political event of nineteenth-century Prince Edward Island.”<sup>23</sup> Holman concludes his article by saying:

If it is difficult to explain just what happened at the Belfast Riot it is even more difficult to explain why. Yes, we know that there were Scots and Irish, and Catholics and Protestants, and landowners and tenants, and Tories and reformers, but so were there at almost every election at that time in the colony. Why should these factors have combined at Pinette Mills on 1 March 1847 to cause this bloody era in the otherwise relatively peaceful history of the colony?<sup>24</sup>

This view of the two most important writers on the riot seems to be the common sentiment, and yet it seems to me that not only is the outline of the story reasonably well recorded but also the reasons for the riot happening when and where it did are fairly clear, albeit complex.

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<sup>21</sup> Rev Roger MacPhee, interview by author, Nov 28, 2005.

<sup>22</sup> Father Gerry Tingley, interview by author, Nov 30, 2005.

<sup>23</sup> O’Grady 203.

<sup>24</sup> Holman 7.



There are essentially five interpretive approaches to understanding the Belfast Riot, all with support from the people of the day. All but one begs the question as to why the Riot happened at this particular time and place and not another, when the same ingredients were common on many other parts of the Island. We will see that it is only by combining all these factors (and others) together that we are able to move towards a satisfactory explanation.

First, a widespread view among modern historians is that it was a customary election battle that got out of hand. This interpretation puts the blame on the system which allowed for open voting, polling over several days, drinking and “muscular persuasion” at elections. All of these concerns were also raised at the time.<sup>25</sup> This is J. M. Bumsted’s view:

While the riots can be seen as part of the Land Question, or as evidence of the ethnic-religious tensions between Presbyterian Scots and Roman Catholic Irishmen, they are probably best viewed in the context of election violence that got out of hand. Given the conditions of polling at the time, the wonder is that Belfast produced the first fatalities during an Island election.<sup>26</sup>

Ian Ross Robertson likewise suggested that “it is possible that the Belfast Riot was simply a routine electoral brawl which got out of control.”<sup>27</sup>

One systemic factor, the use of alcohol, tends to draw a lot of blame in this interpretive approach. Edward Gillis had a grandfather in the Riot and said: “I’ve listened to a lot of stories and, you know . . . there was a little bad religious feeling all right. But I’m still convinced from what I can find out that 75% of the trouble was rum. . . .”<sup>28</sup> Etta Anderson said the tradition in her family was that there was “a lot of bottles scattered on the

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<sup>25</sup> For example, see p 147, and the Islander, Jan 7, 1848.

<sup>26</sup> Bumsted, “Parliamentary Privilege,” 18.

<sup>27</sup> I.R. Robertson, “Highlanders,” 234-5. Holman (p 3) seems to lean towards Robertson’s understanding.

<sup>28</sup> Hornby 120.

ground, alcohol induced the riot.”<sup>29</sup> While no doubt the spirits probably had a role in the violence it fails as an explanation because it was common feature in Island elections and yet never with these results. Most significantly, while rum certainly has caused a few fights in P.E.I. elections, it can hardly be blamed for 400-500 men attacking each other with sticks all afternoon. It is not surprising then to see that in the original sources the role of rum is mentioned only once in regard to the 1847 riot, in a partisan accusation that Coles and Rae distributed it.

This explanation seems to suggest the Belfast Riot was mere chance, but this should be the last resort for an historian seeking explanation of an event. The systemic faults in the electoral system did not so much cause the riot but rather provided the ground on which other tensions were given free range to flare up.

Second, some see the roots of the riot in partisan politics. Whelan in 1864 said that the riot “had nothing to do with religion, it was a conflict between landlord and tenant . . . Irishmen and Scotchmen. . . . their great aim was to secure the election of their respective candidates, Mr. Douse and Mr. Little.”<sup>30</sup> Helen Champion viewed it as a “straight Scots-Irish contest. The Scots supported Douse and McLean; the Irish, Little and McDougall.”<sup>31</sup>

While party politics did play a part in the annulment of the election and in the sides taken, this explanation begs the question above all others, for all elections have party politics as an inherent part, and many were bitterly fought, but only in the Belfast area was there a deadly riot. The central problem in this approach is that while it rightly assumes the Irish voted Reform (except those coerced by the Rent Roll), it wrongly assumes that the Scots as a group voted for the Tories. Many of the Scots in the Selkirk lots were Tory but

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<sup>29</sup> Etta Anderson of the Belfast area, conversation with author, winter 2009.

<sup>30</sup> Parliamentary Reporter or Debates and Proceedings of the Legislative Assemblies of Prince Edward Island, 1876, 1864, 57.

<sup>31</sup> Helen Jean Champion, Over on the Island (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1939), 110.

up to 1846 perhaps more were Reform, otherwise Little and MacDougall would never have been elected in 1846. Moreover many Scots were not especially fond of Douse. Even party politics in the House was not as strictly divided as is sometimes thought, for in nearly every significant vote during this period someone did not vote with his party. Though party politics was a factor during the riots, no one has ever pictured this as a fight between Tories and Reformers.

Third, the Irish view is “that the ultimate cause of the bloody conflict was tangible and deep rooted -- in the land itself,”<sup>32</sup> – “for his discriminatory leasing practices, candidate Douse incurred the wrath of the disadvantaged newcomers from County Monaghan.”<sup>33</sup> O’Grady presents a compelling case for the real cause of the violence being in the tension over the land question, an issue that had in the past and would in the future be the cause of most group violence on the Island.<sup>34</sup> He refers to this as the Irish understanding of what happened, basing this on contemporary Irish commentary, especially from John Little and other members of the Assembly.<sup>35</sup> Errol Sharpe, though viewing it all through a Marxist lens rather than an Irish one, essentially says the same thing: “The Belfast Riot was a clash between those who wanted reform and those who wanted to maintain the status quo. That support for the two positions divided along religious lines was a secondary matter but undoubtedly it added fuel to the fire.”<sup>36</sup>

The value in this approach is that it reflects the heart of Irish anger at the time, and adequately explains why the Irish came armed and prepared to the hustings in both the 1846 and 1847 elections (to drive away any who would vote for the man they rightly saw as

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<sup>32</sup> O’Grady 230.

<sup>33</sup> O’Grady 224.

<sup>34</sup> See O’Grady 210-2 and I.R. Robertson “Highlanders,” 240, n 57.

<sup>35</sup> For these reports from the Royal Gazette see O’Grady 226-9. See also pp 130-131 .

<sup>36</sup> Errol Sharpe, A People’s History of Prince Edward Island, (Toronto: Steel Rail Publishing, 1976), 90.

being behind much of their misery). Its main weakness is that it does not explain the Scottish anger and motivation, nor why 200 Scots mobilized to do battle. Nor does it explain why hundreds of Irish Catholics and Scottish Protestants clubbed each other for hours in James Buchanan's field. This view also overlooks the historical reality that the Scots and Irish were, for the most part, on the same side of the land question. In the Belfast area nearly half the Scots, like their Irish neighbours, were tenants, and most were in support of land reform, at least prior to the Riot. This is well illustrated by a meeting of Reform-minded Scots in the Belfast area in 1836, which unanimously passed Alexander MacLean's resolution:

That the inhabitants of this settlement, the majority of whom are freeholders, do most cordially approve of the immediate establishment of a court of Escheat, as they sincerely sympathize with the tenantry, who have been deluded, injured and oppressed by . . . the landed Proprietors or their agents. . . .<sup>37</sup>

Clearly the Scots did not band together to defend the Tory viewpoint on the land question, arguably the majority of them were for land reform; nor were they there to defend Douse, who some Scots disliked nearly as much as the Irish did. The pitched battle, let us be clear, was not between Irish Reformers and Scottish Tories, nor between Scottish freeholders and Irish tenants, but it was between Irish Catholics and Scottish Protestants. O'Grady's interpretation does highlight the often neglected Irish understanding and is extremely valuable for that, but it fails as an explanation of the whole event for it entirely ignores the Scottish motivations. Even recognizing that his stated goal was to explain the Irish view, O'Grady relied too much on the debates about the 1846 election to explain what happened in 1847. This is not entirely invalid, as the same motivations did drive the Irish on both occasions, but the violence at the by-election was qualitatively different from the 1846 election and demands further explanation.

The fourth view sees William Douse as a lightning rod for violence. This perhaps

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<sup>37</sup> Royal Gazette, April 26, 1836. See also p 126.

should be combined with the above interpretation though, as the next paragraph will demonstrate, in some ways it does stand on its own. The issue in the Belfast area was never just different principles in regard to the land issue, this was common throughout the Island and yet very rarely did it cause even the amount of anger that was witnessed in the 1846 Belfast riot. The Irish were not battling an abstract political philosophy but the implementation of this philosophy in the face of their foe, William Douse. Douse's role in the Riot is well known but even so it seems that all historians downplay his role as a central cause of it. This is really the Irish interpretation of the extreme violence; it happened because of the discriminatory and unfair lease arrangements that William Douse had enforced upon many of his Irish tenants, not because they were fanatic escheators. As John Little said, the Irish had sought long leases but "they were reviled, spurned and treated with contempt"<sup>38</sup> by Douse, and this was the root of their anger.

This interpretation, however, really goes beyond even that, and takes into account Douse's larger than life personality. Douse did not just quietly go about instituting these unfair arrangements, but he rubbed the faces of the Irish in them -- "You shall eat humble pudding with me yet." There are not many politicians who have challenged the electors to a fight during their hustings speech, or who had to hide for fear of being killed. Even the Tories, who voted on behalf of his petition, berated him for his bad behaviour. This man was a magnet for violence.<sup>39</sup> At four of the first seven elections he participated in there were serious incidents of violence, and all were either contested or cancelled. He was so thoroughly detested by his Irish tenants that twice they took up clubs to try and keep people from voting for him. Yet he was also strongly disliked by his Scottish tenants in the 1830s and early-1840s, so much so that they vandalized his property twice and in 1838 met his

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<sup>38</sup> Royal Gazette, Mar 6, 1847.

<sup>39</sup> See his biography, pp 124-127.

attempt to collect the rent with “pitchforks and bludgeons.” This was also evidenced in their rejection of him at the polls<sup>40</sup> and perhaps most vehemently in the 1836 land reform meeting in Belfast, where a group of Scotch Presbyterians in Belfast wanted not only to set up a court of escheat but also a system where land agents could not even run in an election.<sup>41</sup> Finally, he was involved in at least three ugly public quarrels that went to Court, with two Rankins and a fellow land agent.<sup>42</sup>

The one factor in this election which was not in any other election is the candidate Douse himself. All elections had Irish and Scots, Catholics and Protestants, Tories and Reformers, freeholders and tenants, sticks and ledger books, alcohol and more alcohol, but no other had William Douse. This is the only explanation that does not beg the question, “why here and not elsewhere?” While surely there must have been a few other “Douses” they were rare. The only other candidate of the time whom the people felt so much hate towards was James Yeo, but he did not attract the violence that Douse did, probably because he was just too powerful and even to attempt to cross him would have been sheer folly.<sup>43</sup> The intense response that Douse drew seems as well to be due not just to his unfair and discriminatory practices but also to the man himself; he took any challenge to his position as a personal affront. His burly stature and gruff, uncompromising character seems to have elicited the worst in people.

Even so, as great a magnet for violence as Douse seems to have been, this explanation is still inadequate to fully explain what happened. His behaviour at the hustings clearly inflamed the already intense Irish feelings, but few Scots were going to go to battle

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<sup>4</sup> See pp 125-127, 131-132, 153-154.

<sup>5</sup> See Royal Gazette, April 26, 1836, partially quoted on p 160.

<sup>6</sup> DCB, “William Douse.” For Coun Douly Rankin see p 126, n 31. For P.E.I. Times editor William Rankin see the Royal Gazette, Sept 6, 13, 1836.

<sup>7</sup> For an introduction to the “The Ledger Giant” see B. Beck, UnAuthorized History, 73-6.

for William Douse, and nothing in the Scottish traditions suggests they did. It is also clear that while the Irish began to drive off the Scottish supporters of Douse because of their hatred of him, it is hard not to imagine that deeper motivations were starting to well up when one sees how badly they beat some of the Scots. Even, however, if the extreme beatings the Irish laid on the Scots in the first part of the riot were solely related to their hatred of Douse and his land policies, the second part clearly had nothing to do with him.

The final interpretation sees the cause in religious and ethnic rivalry. These two elements are sometimes portrayed as distinct categories, but they should not be. In 3rd Queens they were indissoluble. Yes, the Island had Irish Protestants and Scottish Catholics, but in the Selkirk lots to be a Scot was to be a Presbyterian, and in the riding as a whole to be Irish was to be Catholic. So we should not try to differentiate between an ethnic and a religious explanation, but speak rather of a combined religio-ethnic interpretation, for these two identity markers cannot be wrenched apart.

This interpretation of the riot goes back to the very beginning. Lieutenant Governor Huntley commented in his report to the Colonial Office that: "The outrage in the first instance originated in a determination of the voters of different religious persuasions residing in the district named to return members of their respective churches to the Assembly."<sup>44</sup> It also came out powerfully in the debate in the House on March 13, 1847.<sup>45</sup> The Irish residents of the area, four months after the election, also noted how Douse infuriated them "with religious prejudices."<sup>46</sup> It has always been the Scottish interpretation, though they have also recognized the role of partisan politics and rum in causing the riot.

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<sup>44</sup> "Sir Henry Vere Huntley to Lord Earl Grey," Mar 23, 1847, in "Despatches to the Colonial Office," PARO, CO 226, vol 71; U.P.E.I. Clearly the election had nothing to do in the first instance with getting the member of one's sect elected, but that seems to be Huntley's way of saying it was a religious battle.

<sup>45</sup> See p 170.

<sup>46</sup> See p 137.

This is evidenced in the Belfast Riot song, the Scottish accounts of the riot, and in their oral history. Stanley Bruce told me that “the Catholics didn’t like the Protestants, and vice versa. The Catholics killed that MacRae fellow, so the Scots went and laid a lickin’ on them.”<sup>47</sup> O’Grady said this was also the common view among the nine or ten Scots he informally interviewed from the Belfast area in the mid-1980s.<sup>48</sup> It is also the view of some historians, such as Father MacMillan, who believed the source of the riot lay in “the enmity between Catholics and Protestants, begotten of the Bible Question [of 1845 . . . The election] campaign had not proceeded far, when the virus of religious bigotry impregnated the whole discussion . . . [and then] racial antipathy was added to religious bigotry.”<sup>49</sup> He sees the election mainly as the means through which these negative religious passions came to the surface.

For the Scots the Riot has always been viewed as a religious - ethnic war, but this interpretation, while it effectively explains the Scottish motivation, terribly distorts the Irish one. The Irish did not set out in either election to get Catholics elected (one of the Reformers was a Protestant after all), nor did not they mobilize to combat religious and / or ethnic discrimination (though no doubt some felt this), but they mobilized to keep their hated land agent from getting re-elected. Even though they clearly intended to drive “brave Donald . . . from the hustings” (as the song avers), they were not on a religious crusade and they certainly did not design “to murder all Scotchman.” Moreover, the Scots did not mobilize at the opening of the polls to engage in religious battle with papists; they in fact did not mobilize at all until the election was well underway.

The question then arises, is there any way to draw the Scottish and Irish views together and avoid begging the question, for many other ridings also had significant

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<sup>47</sup> Stanley Bruce interview.

<sup>48</sup> O’Grady interview.

<sup>49</sup> MacMillan, 1835-91, pp 69-70.



religious and ethnic divisions? I believe there is, but one has to have the courage to avoid politically correct and simplistic portrayals of the event. First, one must avoid the temptation to say that the Scots and Irish showed up together at the hustings, both equally armed and prepared to fight, as many have viewed it.<sup>50</sup> This may be a pleasant way to portray it but it ignores the historical sequence of events which is essential to understanding the 'why' of the riot. We need to be very clear that the Irish did initiate the proceedings. They came armed and prepared to intimidate Douse's supporters. The Scots meanwhile did not approach the day with the same fervour, planning or numbers that the Irish had. They did not mass to prevent the Irish from voting for Little or MacDougall or to get someone of their sect elected. In fact they did not mass at all but came to the election in much the same way as normal for a hotly contested election, in small groups for protection, and with some carrying sticks. While the riots of the previous year would have caused the Scottish to be more vigilant, this was likely counterbalanced by the fact that most seemed to have followed their minister's advice to be peaceful.

As the hustings opened and the Irish started to intimidate the Scots, the event was still primarily about the hated land policies of Douse. All that changed when Malcolm MacRae got mortally wounded. It is at this point that the Scots began to mass, not to support Douse but to avenge the attack upon their Scottish, Protestant brothers. With the sanction of the cleric's son they went armed with cudgels to "lay a licking" on their traditional enemies. When the 200 Scots and 300 Irish faced each other across the field, everything had changed. It was no longer Tory vs Reformer, supporters of Douse vs supporters of Little, or freeholders vs tenants -- the ancient animosities had risen fully to the

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<sup>50</sup> See MacMillan (1835-91, pp 69-70); Champion (110-12); Lorne Callbeck, The Cradle of Confederation (Fredericton: Brunswick Press, 1964), 145-6; and Hart, The Story of Old Abegweit (Publisher unknown, ca 1935), 49. This view is already apparent in Huntley's report to the Colonial Office on Mar 23, 1847, when he claimed it "is impossible to say which was the aggressor so violent was the feeling on both sides."

surface and both sides reverted to their basic tribal loyalties – Irish Catholics vs Scottish Protestants. The meaning of the day had changed from a political dogfight centered on the unjust policies of a boisterous land agent, to something akin to a holy war. The factor that transformed the election violence from a political / social issue centered on land to one focussed on ethnic and religious loyalties, was the intense beatings laid on the Scots and particularly the unfortunate mortal wounding of Malcolm MacRae.<sup>51</sup> It is this factor which drove the two groups to their deepest loyalties, that split them into their ancient tribes. This is why the Riot has commonly been seen as a religious - ethnic conflict, not because it began that way but because that is what it had assuredly become in the end. The Irish and the Scottish interpretation are both valid but each in their time and order.

#### “An Unfortunate Confluence of Circumstance”

The Belfast Riot seems to have been the result of a convergence of factors, a perfect storm as it were, or as Alan Buchanan dubbed it, “an unfortunate confluence of circumstance.”<sup>52</sup> Political partisanship, the divisive land question, sectarianism and ethnic rivalry were common in P.E.I. elections of the time, but in Belfast, on March 1, 1847, they were explosive. The intense passions associated with them all came together on that fateful day, to join with the systemic flaws in the electoral process (the open ballot, voting over several days, the availability of rum, and the use of sticks and the rent roll as tools of political persuasion), and a few other co-incidental factors to create extremely ripe conditions for a violent upheaval to break out. As this was a by-election it allowed the parties to focus all their guns on this one battle, and thus we know that at least one Tory

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<sup>51</sup> Interestingly the only writer who seemed to spot this shift of meaning was Jean MacLennan in her very brief recounting of the story. She summarized it as “a clash between the ardent supporters of two rival political parties” which after MacRae’s death “his countrymen resolved to avenge this themselves, and with clan spirit highly roused the Scots began to prepare a drubbing for their Irish opponents” (MacLennan 57).

<sup>52</sup> Hornby 4.

(Dr Conroy) and three Reform (Coles, Rae and Lelacheur) members of the House from outside the riding were present at this election. So the parties were aroused but so too were the local Irishmen who had just witnessed the establishment overturn what they viewed as a legitimate election.

Irish Islanders in general had been politicized since the 1830s, with emancipation and the inspiration of O'Connell, and this abuse of the system obviously called for further political mobilization. So drawing on their experience and resources from the previous year's election, the Irish in 3rd Queens recruited support from both inside and outside the riding, and very intentionally set out to repeat their success of 1846 by an even increased use of 'muscular persuasion.'<sup>53</sup> Irish passions at this time were high, not only due to these local factors but also to what was happening in their homeland. Not only were they living under the unjust and discriminatory policies of their English land agent, but this was the very thing they were fleeing when they fled their homeland. Mooney and Dr Conroy specifically mention this historical sensitivity in the debate over the Douse petition. The former speaks of the Monaghans as coming "to this country, to seek that justice, which was denied them at home." The latter talks about his countrymen who, after placing the Atlantic "between them and their former petty oppressors, and finding even here the same system in operation, . . . must feel as does the thirsty traveller in the desert, when deceived by the atmospheric illusion that shows the limpid lake."<sup>54</sup> Their sense of injustice was no doubt heightened as well because, as Islanders were fully aware,<sup>55</sup> their countrymen were currently in the midst of the devastating potato famine of 1845-48. The by-election was thus a perfect outlet for a very understandable Irish anger, which exploded when Douse's rhetoric

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<sup>53</sup> See p 136.

<sup>54</sup> Royal Gazette, Mar 2, 1847. O'Grady also quotes from these same speeches on pp 227, 228.

<sup>55</sup> See O'Grady 156-7.

further inflamed them.

Then followed the brutal attack on MacRae and the severe beatings laid on the badly out-manned Scots. This provided an opportunity for the latent Scottish Protestant animosity towards the Irish Catholic to be vented, and the aggressive Scottish reaction likewise called out the hostile feelings within the Irish after centuries of discrimination under the Protestant ascendancy. By the time the two sides met passions were further roused by the politician-provided rum, and both sides were well armed with the cudgels and shillelaghs that politicians of the time deemed a normal part of electioneering. Though many P.E.I. elections had various aspects that were the same as this one, it is highly doubtful that so many factors had ever before met in so 'perfect a storm.' All the tactics generally used to control hard fought elections, a good returning officer, the presence of the Sheriff and his constables, were no match for the brewing storm in Belfast. It is this confluence of factors that resulted in this one-of-a-kind event on the Island.

## CHAPTER 8

### THE BEGINNING OF THE SECTARIAN WARS ON THE ISLAND

The Belfast Riot has been generally viewed by Island historians as an atypical event, a sad tale but without much wider or long term impact. Even Ian Ross Robertson drew but a weak causal connection between the riot and the intense religious bigotry that surrounded the education issues that began in 1856. He deemed it and the Bible Question of 1845 as atypical, and merely sustenance for the bigotry of the fifties to feed upon.<sup>1</sup> My conclusion, however, is that it was the pivotal event which allowed the ancient sectarian animosities to break through the thin veneer of religious tolerance that characterized life on P.E.I. up until the mid-1840s. I will now attempt to show that it was not just an isolated event but in fact seems to be the main catalyst in ushering in the bitter religious animosity that would dominate Island politics and educational issues from 1856-77.

Religious tension had always existed on the Island. This was hardly surprising in a population dominated by Scots and Irish, who brought their ancient religious and ethnic prejudices with them when they emigrated to the Island.<sup>2</sup> What is perhaps surprising is how well the two communities got along in spite of these tensions. Whelan said of the time before the riot that “peace and harmony prevailed here to an extent which did credit to the tolerance of the people.”<sup>3</sup> Robertson saw the genesis of sectarian hostility as happening in

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<sup>1</sup> I.R. Robertson, “Religion,” 33,38.

<sup>2</sup> For some insight on this background see I.R. Robertson, “Religion,” 39-41.

<sup>3</sup> Parliamentary Reporter, 1864, 57. See similar comments two paragraphs below and on p 82.

1856, “When it became profitable for one political party to exploit religious loyalties for its own purposes.”<sup>4</sup> As we shall soon see, however, this exploiting of religious animosities began to take root immediately after the Belfast Riot; it just did not become full blown until the mid-1850s. It is as if the cataclysmic violence of the riots allowed all of these partially submerged feelings to come to the surface, not only in Belfast but all across the Island as well, and this began immediately following the election.<sup>5</sup>

Evidence of open sectarianism was first witnessed in the March 13 debates in the House in response to the Lieutenant Governor’s request to hold the election in Charlottetown.<sup>6</sup> In his opening speech committee chair, Francis Longworth, reported: “I have heard with deep regret that combinations are in course of formation, not merely of a political, but of a religious character. . . . I have heard from respectable Roman Catholic gentlemen, as well as Protestants, that a very bad feeling is getting up, that religious differences are appealed to, for political purposes. . . .” He then noted that “these differences have been hitherto been unknown among us” and disavowed “every attempt to introduce into this hitherto peaceful community [i.e., P.E.I.], the brand of religious discord.” It was at this point that MHA Mooney offered up his “cloven foot” remark which begins this thesis, but his hope that this feeling would soon die would be dashed. Mr John Macintosh regretted the arousal of religious animosity but noted there was none in his part of the world (1st Kings), where Catholics were two to one, and he spoke of his good friendship with Protestants. Palmer concurred in Longworth’s remarks that “something more than political feeling has been aroused by the events of the late elections.”

Second, it was seen in political agitation. The Catholic community clearly began to feel under siege after the Belfast Riot. This comes out most forcefully in the

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<sup>4</sup> I.R. Robertson, “Highlanders,” 235.

<sup>5</sup> Robb 32, holds a similar view.

<sup>6</sup> All quotes in this section are from the Royal Gazette, Mar 16, 1847.

aforementioned meeting of Catholics in Vernon River on July 12, 1847. The first resolution passed there made specific note of Protestant discrimination against Catholics. It said now that the “odious penal Statutes” are repealed they “most energetically protest against that puerile, objectionable, and exclusive system of a religious ascendancy in selecting, as Grand and Petit Jurors, with very few exceptions, individuals professing the Protestant faith,” and concluded by noting that the recent Grand Jury only had one Catholic. It also had two resolutions in relation to the Belfast Riot.<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps the issue that manifested the most political nastiness in 1847 was the Tory attempt to have Lieutenant Governor Huntley removed, and it too had religious overtones. In an article entitled “Bigotry,” Edward Whelan charged the Tories with rumour mongering as they “openly assert . . . that His Excellency aims at the establishment of Catholic ascendancy in the Island, and the utter destruction of Protestant influence and interest.” He then made the very significant comment that “it is a melancholy fact that religious prejudices have run riot in many parts of the Island, since the late Belfast Elections.”<sup>8</sup>

Third, it became evident in subsequent elections. In the first by-election to be held after the Riot, Protestant - Catholic sectarianism made its debut as an issue in Island elections. It was held May 3, 1847, in 1st Queens, and was won by Reformer George Coles. The Examiner accused the Tories of:

Exciting national and religious feelings among people too easily influenced by their prejudices on national and religious topics. . . . every effort was made to arouse the bigotry of the credulous and unthinking. The Protestant portion of the District had it continually dined [sic] into their ears, that Mr. Coles was desirous of establishing a Catholic ascendancy. . . . the Irishmen, again, were attempted to be cajoled into the belief that Mr. Coles was an enemy to their country and their creed . . .”<sup>9</sup>

Contrast this to the 1846 election when Coles was likewise castigated for religious bigotry,

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<sup>7</sup> Examiner, Aug 7, 1847 (for more on this meeting see pp 136, 147, 153).

<sup>8</sup> Examiner, August 21, 1847.

<sup>9</sup> Examiner, Aug 7, 1847.

but not in a Protestant - Catholic context but because he aided the Church of England against the Presbyterians.<sup>10</sup> Coles's second by-election in March 1848 saw more of this same quality of political rhetoric. He commented that "religious and national prejudices were attempted to be aroused against me – the Presbyterians, Methodists and Churchmen were told that I had become a Catholic; the Catholics . . . were told that I was an enemy to their religion, and the Irish people had it whispered in their ears . . . that I was a foe to their country and race."<sup>11</sup> Whelan in turn got rebuked in this by-election, by a Catholic elector from St Peter's, for stirring up religious animosity at an election.<sup>12</sup>

In the next full election, 1850, Whelan accused the Conservatives of asserting while canvassing: "That if the Catholics were allowed to gain the ascendancy in the House of Assembly, freedom of religion would be abolished; and Protestant throats would be unsparingly cut."<sup>13</sup> It is hard to miss the echoes of Belfast in that last remark. By that summer the Liberal majority in the House were charged with deliberately excluding the only two elected Catholics (Brennan and Thornton) from the Executive Council.<sup>14</sup> In an 1851 by-election and the 1853 general election Warburton was falsely accused of both supporting the Orange Order and of "ridicul[ing] the religion of my Roman Catholic neighbours."<sup>15</sup> In an 1852 by-election Whelan charged that:

An appeal had to be made to the bigotry and intolerance of the Presbyterian electors of Georgetown and Royalty, who were led to believe that their religion would be endangered by the election of a Roman Catholic . . . The worst of all hatreds, a religious one, had been enkindled to destroy the peace of the

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<sup>10</sup> Islander, Nov 6, 1846.

<sup>11</sup> Examiner, July 17, 1848.

<sup>12</sup> Examiner, Mar 11, 1848, Islander, Mar 10, 1848.

<sup>13</sup> Examiner, July 31, 1850.

<sup>14</sup> For this debate see the Islander, July 26 & Aug 2, 1850; July 12, 1852; Sept 8, 1854; and the Examiner, July 31, 1850.

<sup>15</sup> Royal Gazette, June 27, 1853, and Parliamentary Reporter, 1855, p 67.



community . . . .<sup>16</sup>

Another person charged that the Conservatives encouraged the ignorant Protestants to believe that they “would have their throats cut if an Irishman and Catholic was to be returned for this place.”<sup>17</sup> The name of George Coles was again associated with sectarian warfare in politics in the 1853 election, the Conservatives once more being charged with whispering one thing into Catholic ears and another into Protestant ones.<sup>18</sup> Whelan further alleged that they “humped up every lie their devilish ingenuity could invent to array the religious prejudices of the Isle of Skye Scotch against him.”<sup>19</sup>

With these realities it is no surprise that Isabella Lucy Bird, who visited among the elite of Charlottetown in the summer of 1854 (two years before the Bible Question arose), became quickly aware that the combustible mix of politics and religion was already an established fact on the Island:

The genius of Discord must look complacently on this land. Politics have been a fruitful source of quarrels . . . and division. The opposition parties are locally designated “snatchers” and “snarlers,” and no love is lost between the two. It is broadly affirmed that half the people on the Island do not speak to the other half. And, worse than all, religious differences have been brought up as engines wherewith to wreak political animosities. I never saw a community in which people seemed to hate each other so cordially.”<sup>20</sup>

The last line nicely portrays the nature of the sectarian enmity on the Island at this time.

Evidence of sectarianism was also witnessed to some degree in the press in the decade after the riot. While the Island press from 1848-56 was dominated by issues like

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<sup>16</sup> Royal Gazette, Mar 1, 1852.

<sup>17</sup> Royal Gazette, Mar 5, 1852. This was followed by a debate surrounding the Orange Lodge in Charlottetown (Examiner, March 15, 1852, and the Islander, July 12, 1852).

<sup>18</sup> Royal Gazette, June 27, 1853.

<sup>19</sup> Examiner July 25, 1853. The charges were dredged up again in the Islander on Mar 3 & Sept 8, 1854.

<sup>20</sup> Isabella Lucy Bird, The Englishwoman in America (1856; reprint, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), 41. One should note that she had a much kinder assessment of the Island’s rural folk (50 ff).

responsible government, free education, and temperance, stories about sectarian tensions were not rare. Those concerning the local scene were almost always of a political nature (see above). The only other example we <sup>21</sup> uncovered concerned a minor dispute with regard to charity funds going mostly to Protestants.<sup>22</sup> More often the sectarian expression was indirectly made, via the foreign items an editor chose to reprint. In the Examiner of November 6, 1847, the Catholic Whelan carried a report from the Toronto Globe critical of “Orange Associations in Canada.” He also covered the recent Nova Scotia Reform victory, specifically commenting that John Harvey (a Protestant) “can read all the lying trash which had been published about the interference of Catholic Priests” but the purpose of this is only to strike a “chord of bigotry.” Reports of sectarian troubles in other parts of the world were also carried in the Island papers but without commentary. This included the riots in Fredericton, New Brunswick (Islander of December 6, 1847), Limerick, Ireland (Islander, Aug 15, 1852), Stockport, England (Islander, Aug 2, 1852), in Quebec surrounding Father Gavazzi (Islander, June 24, July 4, 1853), and in New York (Islander, July 16, 1854); the Clergy Reserves Issue in Canada (Royal Gazette, Nov 2, 1854); and two articles about conversions to Catholicism (Examiner Aug 17, Oct 26, 1850).

The issue from outside P.E.I. that received the most press coverage was that of the ‘Papal Aggression’ in England in 1850.<sup>23</sup> In his December 21, 1850, Examiner editorial, Whelan asserted that in the last five months of this year: “The local press . . . occupied much of its space with long extracts from the English journals, under the ominous heading of ‘Papal Aggression,’ all characterised by the most rampant hostility to the Pope and the

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<sup>21</sup> Most of this paragraph is based on research done by my students. They examined most of the Island papers for the years 1850-54.

<sup>22</sup> Examiner Feb 5, 12, 1855.

<sup>23</sup> See p 100 for a brief explanation.

newly appointed English Bishops. . . .”<sup>24</sup> Editor Whelan then proffered caustic comments about “the anti-Popery belligerents” and “the hacknied [sic] cry of ‘No Popery!’” and accused the other two Island papers of taking the Protestant side. He then set out to defend (and did so very ably) the Catholic position that there was no threat to the supremacy of the Queen in the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy in England, concluding:

There is reason to entertain the suspicion that the [British] Premier [Russell] seeks to derive political capital from an appeal to the passions and bigotry of the nation, by enlisting the sympathies of the bigoted enthusiasts of every creed in his favour – by offering balm to the wounds which the Establishment has received from Puseyism . . . .

While the Island’s Conservatives, by the end of the decade, would be very effectively ‘cashing in’ on this same “political capital,” overall the issue of Papal Aggression does not seem to have caused major ripples there. Certainly not like it did in Ontario, where it effectively launched their sectarian wars.

A fifth testimony to the growth of sectarianism was seen in the rise of Orangeism after 1859. Robertson saw this as being due to “the Protestant sense of alarm at the apparent aggressiveness of the Roman Catholic Church at home and abroad which explains the sudden and dramatic growth of Orangeism in a colony largely devoid of Protestant Ulstermen.”<sup>25</sup> Protestant leaders of the day, however, attributed the rise of Orangeism specifically to the Belfast Riot. W. H. Pope, MLA from Belfast, in arguing for the Orange Lodge Bill<sup>26</sup> in 1864, asserted that the Island Lodges rather than having caused mischief have instead:

Suppressed Popish outrages and murders . . . since their establishment we have not had such scenes as previously thereto we had -- no Belfast Riots, no way

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<sup>24</sup> This is a fair summation of the reality. See the *Examiner* for 1850 (Aug 17,24; Nov 16,20; Dec 4,21,25,28); for 1851 (Jan 1,8; Apr 14; May 19; June 16). Also the *Islander* for 1850 (Nov 11,22; Dec 6,13,20). The papers included re-prints of Lord Russell’s “Durham Letter” and Cardinal Wisemen’s “Appeal to the People of England.”

<sup>25</sup> I.R. Robertson, “Party Politics,” 57.

<sup>26</sup> See p 191.

laying of Protestants by Papists. . . . The immediate cause of the institution of Orange Lodges was the Belfast Riot . . . occasioned by an attempt made by the Roman Catholics to return two (sic) members of their own faith.<sup>27</sup>

Assemblyman Duncan echoed these remarks: “As to the history of Orange Lodges on the Island, their origin dates from an attack made by rowdies from all parts of the Island, upon respectable parties resident at Belfast.”<sup>28</sup>

Whelan in response argued that the riot had no connection to the rise of Orangeism and “nothing to do with religion.”<sup>29</sup> Pope’s rebuttal was to point out that one side were all Protestants and the other all Catholics. The interpretive approach to the riot by Catholics and Protestants is very clear in these remarks, but so is the political posturing of the three members of the House, the Conservatives seeking to accentuate the sectarian feelings which will aid their party in the polls, the Liberal seeking to downplay them. Even so, one cannot simply lay aside the insider’s claim as to why the Orange Lodges arose on the Island. This is confirmed by the facts that the first Orange Lodge appeared on the Island in 1851, and the next three were established in the Belfast area in 1859, along with a fourth the following year. While the Bible Question was the immediate cause of the rise of Orange Lodges from one in 1858 to fifteen in 1862, that does not imply there was little interest in Orangeism on the Island during the previous decade. The reason for Orange impotence in this period was not because the Protestants did not seek to establish any Lodges, but rather because Lieutenant Governor Bannerman saw their attempts to do so as being so threatening to stability on the Island that in 1852 he declared Orange Lodges illegal.<sup>30</sup> While there is no doubt that the fear of Catholic aggressiveness in the late-1850s played a major role in the

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<sup>27</sup> Parliamentary Reporter, 1864, p 54, 58. See also the Protestant, July 2, 1862, and the Examiner, May 9, 1864.

<sup>28</sup> Parliamentary Reporter, 1864, p 56.

<sup>29</sup> For this quote see p 158.

<sup>30</sup> MacMillan, 1835-91, p 240. The quotes in relation to Warburton above (p 172) also give evidence that it was a hot issue in the early-1850s. See also p 154.

growth of the Orange Order, still the ‘home’ event that started it all for Protestants was clearly the “holy war” in Belfast.

Raymond Lahey, in describing how Newfoundland evolved from its period of “borrowed peace” to its “sectarian wars,” noted that: “While bigotry and intolerance were never far from the surface anywhere, their emergence as dominant factors invariably required a triggering mechanism.”<sup>31</sup> He described in detail some of the “seeds of discord” in the previous decade that had created discontent in Catholic hearts but noted it was John Kent’s “infamous Irishmen and Catholicism speech” on the hustings in Newfoundland’s first election in 1832, in which he called them to “stand up for your country and creed” and claimed the support of the Bishop and clergy, that ignited over a half century of sectarian violence in the colony. There were also “seeds of discord” sown among Irish Catholics on the Island, mostly centered around the unfair land policies of the predominantly Protestant landlords, but it still required the triggering mechanism of the Belfast Riot to ignite P.E.I.’s wars. It is ironic that sectarian politics proved to be the trigger for the religious violence in Newfoundland, while religious violence on P.E.I. proved to be the trigger for its sectarian politics.

As noted earlier the Belfast Riot often gets treated as a unique and aberrant event in Island history but in fact it was an absolutely pivotal event. Prior to it the Protestants and Catholics on the Island got along tolerably well, immediately following it significant tensions began to surface, and within a decade they become full blown during the sectarian / education wars of 1856-77. The essential reasons the connection between Belfast and the education debates seem to have been overlooked are because the intensity of the violence at the Belfast Riot has been underestimated, the primary sources between 1847 and 1856 have not been seriously investigated for signs of bigotry, and it has not been fully appreciated that

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<sup>31</sup> Lahey 50.

sectarian violence is not just an isolated incident that participants soon regret and forget, but it radically alters the quality of their relationship.

Owen Chadwick made the latter point in his discussion on the occasional bloodshed between Catholics and Huguenots under the Edict of Nantes, commenting that “killings leave behind them ineradicable bitterness.”<sup>32</sup> Serious religious violence shatters trust and goodwill between the opposing parties, especially if there were significant tensions below the surface prior to the violent episodes, and it thereby causes one to draw closer to their ancestral tribal affiliation for safety and protection from the now, clearly identifiable enemy. Just as the peace in Northern Ireland was shattered by a major violent incident in 1969, which launched their “Troubles,” so were P.E.I.’s “Troubles” of 1847-77 ignited by a violent episode. The Belfast Riot of 1847 is, therefore, best seen not just as an aberration before the religious wars of 1856-77 but as the first step towards them. Robertson claims that there was not much sectarian hostility before 1856 when political parties began to find it profitable to exploit religious loyalties,<sup>33</sup> but the above examples show rather that it was growing and political parties had been at this exploitation work ever since the Irish Catholics and Protestant Scots had come to blows in a field in Belfast almost a decade earlier.

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<sup>32</sup> Owen Chadwick, The Reformation (Baltimore: Penguin, 1968), 167.

<sup>33</sup> I.R. Robertson, “Highlanders,” 235-6. For the full quote see p 170.

## CHAPTER 9

### THE EDUCATION QUESTIONS (1856-77)

#### The Bible Question (1856-60)

From the beginning of schooling on the Island Bible reading (and catechism) were common in both Protestant and Catholic schools. There were only two schools from which it was explicitly excluded, Central Academy (later Prince of Wales College) and the Normal School. By the 1840s Protestants started to push to have the positive moral influence of the Bible as an integral and official part of the whole school system. Catholics were opposed to this because they believed Catholics should only be reading from the Douay Version and they believed Bible reading had to be accompanied by the interpretation of the church.

The place of the Bible in the public schools first became a political issue in 1845 at the Annual Meeting of the Auxiliary Bible Society of Charlottetown, which called for the removal of the “unchristian defect” of the Bible being excluded from the books of the Central Academy. The debate in the House “was singularly free from all sectarian bitterness,”<sup>1</sup> and the Protestant-dominated Assembly decisively resisted making any changes that would offend Catholics. Then in 1847 a committee was established by the Legislative Council to look at the practicality of allowing a “separation in the Schools,” not to satisfy Catholics but for “that portion of the community which entertains the opinion that the Bible ought to form the basis of Education.”<sup>2</sup> It was deemed impractical. In 1852 *The Free*

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<sup>1</sup> MacMillan, 1835-91, p 69.

<sup>2</sup> Royal Gazette, May 4, 1847. Cf Islander, April 30, 1847.

*Education Act* specifically addressed the issue of Bible reading in public schools, allowing for it in schools where parents requested it, but always with the proviso that it not be accompanied by any explanation.

The real trouble began on October 1, 1856, when School Inspector Stark announced, at the inauguration of the Normal School for training teachers, that the new institution's "moral development" would include "a daily Bible lesson . . . in which the truths and facts of Scripture will be brought before the children's minds by illustration and picturing out in words, in language simple and easy to be understood, from which everything sectarian and controversial shall be carefully excluded."<sup>3</sup> This innocent remark ushered in the Bible Controversy and twenty-one years of sectarian strife on P.E.I. Bishop Bernard Macdonald on November 11 wrote a very strong letter against this idea to the Board of Education: "I earnestly beg of the Board to reconsider the evil tendency of introducing religion in any shape into our mixed schools . . . if the friends of education wish our mixed schools to prosper, their wish can only be realized by allowing these schools to be *godless*."<sup>4</sup>

Rev David Fitzgerald (the new cleric at St Paul's Anglican Church in Charlottetown and member of the School Board) and other influential Protestant ministers then launched a campaign to get the Bible not just permitted but legally established in the schools. Protestants began to hold Bible meetings throughout the Colony, at which they passed resolutions to authorize Bible reading which were then afterwards submitted to the government. These climaxed with the Great Protestant Meeting of February 13, 1857. During the evening session, chaired by Colonel John Hamilton Gray (a Presbyterian and soon to be Father of Confederation), there was an overflow crowd. Many inflammatory

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<sup>3</sup> Haszard's Gazette, Oct 11, 1856.

<sup>4</sup> "Bishop Macdonald to John MacNeil," Nov 7, 1856. Re-produced in the Examiner, Feb 23, 1857.



anti-Catholic remarks were made, including a reference to Maynooth College, “Which sends forth each year a number of priests, to prove a curse to the world.” The second resolution read: “No education . . . can be good . . . from which the word of God is excluded.” The third that “whereas the Protestants of this Island constitute the greater portion of its inhabitants, and contribute the larger amount of taxation . . . : -- It is resolved . . . that the children of such parents as desired should be daily instructed in the Word of God.” A petition, calling for the Bible to “be placed on a list of books now in use in the public schools, and that it be introduced into the Academy and Normal School,” was also distributed.<sup>5</sup>

The Bible Question was raised in the House on March 20, 1857, and would maintain a prominent place there until resolved in 1860. It also began to impact political fortunes in the by-election of June 1, 1857, when the Protestant majority got their Conservative candidate, James C. Pope, elected. On February 19, 1858, another Great Protestant Meeting was held, which called for every effort to be made “to return sound Protestant and Bible-loving men at the ensuing General Election.”<sup>6</sup> The clarion call of the Protector on May 5 was: “Let the only question be between Protestantism and Romanism.” In the June election of 1858 the Liberals won by a narrow 16-14 margin, the Bible question being the prime reason for their decline in popularity. In September of that year the Coles government finally capitulated and authorized a chapter of Bible reading in the Normal School every morning “without note or comment - by those children whose parents desire the same.”<sup>7</sup>

Then came the first election on the Island that split the parties based on sect, a

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<sup>5</sup> Examiner, Feb 23, 1857. The next year Joseph Howe in Nova Scotia was making an even stronger demand, to wit, that no public school would receive funding unless it had daily Bible readings (see Meagher 155).

<sup>6</sup> Protector and Christian Witness, Feb 24, 1858. Cf Jan 27, 1858.

<sup>7</sup> Minutes of the Executive Council, Sept 7, 1858.

phenomenon not uncommon in this era, being also witnessed in Ontario (1851), Nova Scotia (1859), Newfoundland (1861 & 1885), and New Brunswick (1874).<sup>8</sup> Yet nowhere was it more pronounced than on P.E.I., where nearly every election from 1859-76 saw the parties divided in this way, the Protestants first supporting the Conservatives and then the Liberals, while it was vice versa for the Catholics. On March 19, 1859, the Conservatives won the election by an 18-12 margin. The compelling issue was the Bible Question: “The fomenting of religious controversy . . . had been the Tories avenue to political power.”<sup>9</sup> Every Tory member was a Protestant and only James Yeo and Thomas Owen had won in a district that was majority Catholic. The Liberals had some Protestant representation but were mostly Catholic. The Islander commented that the “contest for the first time was a religious one. The Liberals received the support of the Roman Catholic party who determined to carry out the godless system demanded by their Bishop. The majority of Protestants rallied round the Conservatives.”<sup>10</sup> Both Protestant and Catholic clergy were involved in campaigning for their parties.

The irony, however, was that the new government was quite slow to implement the agenda of the Protestants who had placed them in power and were very moderate in any changes they implemented, suggesting a certain amount of cynicism about their espousal of the religious cause. This would prove to be the case throughout this 21 year period. In the end the only real change in matters educational was that Bible reading was now allowed in the Normal School. The ramifications on a social and political level, however, were enormous, as the editor of the Islander noted: “The last election exhibited the strength of the two parties into which the people of this Island now are, and for the time to come will

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<sup>8</sup> See respectively pp 103,114,106,107,111.

<sup>9</sup> E. MacDonald, SDU, 66.

<sup>10</sup> Cited by W. MacKinnon, Party, 33, date not given.

continue to be divided - a Protestant and a Roman Catholic party.”<sup>11</sup> New education issues would only serve to deepen this divide.

### The Endowment of Saint Dunstan’s College (1858-63)

The second great education issue concerned public funding for the Catholic Saint Dunstan’s College (SDC). Following its establishment in 1855 there were three unsuccessful attempts, from 1858-61, to attain funding for it, but all they ever received was a £75 grant. The second of these attempts occurred while secular Prince of Wales College (PWC) was being established, and it is from this time that one can date the new preference of P.E.I.’s Protestants for “godless” education, which still predominated in the University discussions a century later.

The appointment of the new bishop, Peter McIntyre,<sup>12</sup> increased the intensity of sectarian feelings on the Island. McIntyre “was proud, energetic and ultramontane.”<sup>13</sup> He was the only Maritime bishop to support the proclamation of the infallibility of the Pope at the Vatican Council in 1870 and he warmly recommended Pope Pius IX’s *Syllabus of Errors*.<sup>14</sup> He was a strong-willed man, a builder and a true leader, and not afraid of getting involved in the political process: “His was an aggressive Catholicism, anxious to place Island Catholics on an equal footing, socially, politically, and economically, with their Protestant neighbours. Under the circumstances, Protestants needed little persuasion to

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<sup>11</sup> Islander, Dec 30, 1859.

<sup>12</sup> See p 95.

<sup>13</sup> I.R. Robertson, “Religion,” 77. Ultramontanism was a philosophical movement within Catholicism in the 1800s that responded to the Church’s loss of political power by looking “over the mountain” (i.e., from France to the Pope in Italy) for spiritual strength and unity. It was solidly Tridentine in its theology, gave even more authority to the Pope, and placed Protestants outside of the spiritual Pale.

<sup>14</sup> Cited in I.R. Robertson, “Religion,” 239.

interpret ‘assertion’ as ‘aggression.’”<sup>15</sup>

In the month following the last of these failed attempts to gain funding for SDC the Conservative leadership made three unsuccessful efforts to curry the Catholic vote by offering concessions on various educational matters, but these moves failed. The Bishop then threatened that he would do the utmost in his power to defeat the government in the next election, and the result was the Island’s most sectarian election, in 1863, the main dividing issue being the endowment of the Catholic Saint Dunstan’s College. An editorial in the Monitor of September 3, 1862, asserted that the main issue in the campaign would be: “On the one side, an open Bible, and the free and happy service of God . . . and on the other the Mass book and the dominion of the Pope and his hireling priesthood. In other words, religious liberty or superstitious slavery, - Protestantism or Romanism.” The Orange Lodge lobbied strenuously on behalf of the Conservative Party, while the Catholic Press accused the Tories of belonging to this dangerous and secret society, and suspected “that many, if not all the members of these associations are furnished by the government with firearms for the approaching elections.”<sup>16</sup> The Tories won by a decisive 18-12 margin. Without exception Protestant Tories were elected in Protestant majority districts and Liberals in Catholic majority districts. A short time later the first election for the Legislative Council was held and won by the Tories 9-4. Once more religious lines were strictly followed. By the summer of 1863, in spite of the central role sectarianism played in the election, the religious question was ignored, and the land question and Confederation would move to the political forefront for the next five years.

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<sup>15</sup> E. MacDonald, SDU, 73.

<sup>16</sup> Vindicator, Nov 14, 1862. The charge is repeated in the Jan 9, 1863 issue.

### Separate Schools Issue (1868-77)

The school and religion questions were, however, only sleeping. They re-entered the political arena in 1868 when Bishop McIntyre broadened his call for endowment from just SDC to the entire Catholic school system. Initially the Bishop was just seeking endowment for his four Catholic schools but by 1873 he was seeking a full separate system. For the next nine years the question of whether to have a separate school system or not would be the main political issue on the Island, generally eclipsing even the issues of Confederation and the Railway. It was at this point that Catholics began to support the Conservative Party because they were willing to make concessions on funding for Catholic schools, and Protestants turned to the Liberal Party who were intent on maintaining the status quo.

In the July 1870 election the Liberals were returned by a 17-13 margin, but they were not destined to remain in government for long. A split developed in the Liberal party over the school funding issue and all their Roman Catholic members, save one, switched to the Tories, and formed a new coalition government with them on September 10. In April 1872 the Liberals were returned again, with a larger 19-11 margin. The Conservatives had resorted again to the tactic of using a sectarian issue to garner support, but this time they were trying to rally Catholics not Protestants. This new and odd alliance of Catholic Liberals, Bishop McIntyre and the Conservative party united around the separate school question, and though they lost at the polls they continued to work together behind the scenes. The following April they proved successful, as J. C. Pope's Conservatives won the decade's third election, 20-10. The election had been called because the Liberals wanted to take the Confederation issue to the polls, but surprisingly the School Question proved to be a bigger issue than Confederation. The Tories won nearly half the seats where Protestants were dominant and swept the twelve Catholic seats. The swirl of politics and personalities

around the now intertwined issues of Confederation and separate schools had the inadvertent result of no progress being made in the public endowment of Catholic schools.

P.E.I. joined Canada on July 1 and soon afterwards the Catholics turned against the Tories, feeling they had betrayed them. Bishop McIntyre even denounced the Conservatives from the pulpit on at least three occasions in the lead-up to P.E.I.'s first federal election on September 17, 1873.<sup>17</sup> The Liberals won four of six seats, due in large part to the swing in the Catholic vote. A local issue, the school question, thereby determined the result of P.E.I.'s first federal election, and this would be more pronounced the following year when the Liberals won all six Federal seats, much of this due to the help of the Bishop.

With the settlement of the Confederation and Railway debates in 1873 and the Land Question in 1875, Island politics became focussed on but one issue, the separate school debate.<sup>18</sup> On April 7, 1875, Catholics presented two petitions to the House, with nearly 10,000 names, requesting a *per capita* allowance for students instructed in Catholic schools. The next day three petitions opposing this were also submitted, signed by over forty Protestant clergyman.<sup>19</sup> These and other concerns about the education system led to a committee of five, chaired by soon-to-be Premier Louis Davies, being set up to investigate education on April 21, 1876. Davies's goal was to settle the education question which was agitating "the whole civilized world . . . once for all," for it had "been made the political shuttlecock long enough."<sup>20</sup> This report clearly laid out the School Question before the

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<sup>17</sup> Islander, Aug 22 and Oct 10, 1873, and MacMillan, 1835-1891, pp 356-8 (for further details see I.R. Robertson, "Religion," 228).

<sup>18</sup> For key statements from both religious parties see the Patriot, Mar 7, 1874.

<sup>19</sup> See I.R. Robertson, "Religion," 255.

<sup>20</sup> Parliamentary Reporter, 1876, p 185. Davies himself argued that while separate schools would nurture suspicion, bitterness and hate, "He had learned from experience that Protestants and Roman Catholics could mix together, and grow up in friendship together, being the better for it as boys, and ten times better as men" (Parliamentary Reporter, 1874, p 521).

electorate, and it became the sole focus of the 1876 election campaign.

Frank MacKinnon deemed this election campaign “the bitterest in Island History,”<sup>21</sup> noting both verbal and physical fistcuffs at political meetings. The disruption in party allegiances that had been in evidence since the beginning of the school issues came to full fruition in this election. The Tory and Liberal parties ceased to function and were replaced by two school parties. The “Free School Party” was led by the Liberal Davies with two key Tories by his side – George Deblois (his running partner) and T. Heath Haviland. James Pope led the Denominationalists but the leading Catholic public figure on the Island, W. W. Sullivan, was nearly as important. On August 17 the Free Schoolers won 19-11. They were all Protestant while the losing Denominationalist Party was all Catholic, except for one member, and Pope himself was defeated.<sup>22</sup>

On July 1, 1877, after a decade of impassioned debate, the Island decisively rejected a separate school system with the passing of the *Public Schools Act*. Section 92 stipulated that “all schools conducted under the provisions of this Act shall be non-sectarian, and the Bible may be read in all such schools, and is hereby authorized, and the Teachers are hereby required to open the school on each school day with the reading of the Sacred Scriptures by those children whose parents or guardians desire it, without comment.”<sup>23</sup> All the private schools, excepting one, eventually joined the public system. The war, however, was not quite over. Bishop McIntyre submitted an 18,000 name petition to the Governor General, Lord Dufferin, seeking to get the Provincial statute disallowed under Section 93 of the

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<sup>21</sup> Frank MacKinnon, “The Island Knight: A Sketch of the Rt. Hon. Sir Louis Davies,” *Island Magazine* 47 (Spring/Summer 2000): 5.

<sup>22</sup> The 1874 election in New Brunswick was also decided on the separate school issue, thirty-six seats being won by those who supported the *Common Schools Act* of 1871, and five by separate school supporters.

<sup>23</sup> The Acts of the General Assembly of Prince Edward Island, 1877, 39.

BNA Act.<sup>24</sup> The Minister of Justice justifiably disallowed his case because there had been no sectarian schools *established by law* prior to Confederation.<sup>25</sup> The new Bill met with considerable opposition, motivated both by religious principles and money concerns, but in spite of this it proved to be a great success, and set the tone for P.E.I.'s educational future until the late-1950s. By the time this new system started to be dismantled, to meet the new demands of the twentieth century, P.E.I. had 475 school districts, most consisting of one or two room schools, which provided education for children from grades 1-10.

After the Bill was passed a return to the traditional party structure was finally made possible. MLA Stewart commented in the House in 1874 that the school question "had been the means of hurling governments from power, and putting others in their stead, and the man who could devise a good scheme to settle the matter, and cement the feelings of the people, would be the greatest patriot which the Island had ever produced."<sup>26</sup> Louis Davies turned out to be the leader who devised the scheme but it proved to be the end of his career as a political patriot (though other factors also played a role in his downfall). By August of 1878 four of the five Conservatives had abandoned their temporary alliance with Premier Davies and returned home, and the old party names returned. W. W. Sullivan fell into the leadership of the Conservative party with the defeat of all the Protestant leaders. He became the Island's first Catholic Premier in 1879 when the Conservatives swept the Island 24-6 and Davies lost his seat. Sullivan based his campaign on the pledge that he would not change the Public School Act and he kept his promise.

Bishop McIntyre did not cease to hope for the day when the catechism would be

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<sup>24</sup> New Brunswick's Acadians likewise made a court challenge to their own non-sectarian *Common Schools Act* (1871) on this basis but also lost (see p 111).

<sup>25</sup> Catholic historian D.I. McGuigan, 149-58, in a lengthy analysis concurred with this assessment.

<sup>26</sup> Parliamentary Reporter, 1874, 450. Catholic member Nicholas Conroy likewise stated "unfortunately this Question had been made a political stalking horse upon which political parties had been ridden into power" (447-8 and cf 443).



part of the school system but the truth was in many schools it did continue. In spite of Davies' dream of Protestants and Roman Catholics growing up in friendship by mixing together in public schools the resultant reality was a school system that was theoretically non-sectarian but in practice separate, as we shall see in Part III.

### Orangeism on the Island (1851-80)

While most of the sectarian animosities in this period were centred around religion, education and politics, they also surfaced around other political issues. This included the Militias (1860-1), Patronage (1860-1), Confederation (1864),<sup>27</sup> several bitter sectarian debates conducted in the local press (1860-3),<sup>28</sup> and the incorporation of the Orange Lodge. We will only briefly discuss the last of these.

Whelan declared the Orange organization to be "the most hellish which ever disgraced God's earth."<sup>29</sup> The first lodge formed on the Island was Boyne Lodge, in Charlottetown, in 1851. By May 6, 1852, sectarian tension was high enough that Lieutenant Governor Bannerman's pronounced a Proclamation against Orange Lodges. He called upon "all Justices of the Peace, Ministers of Religion, and Civil Officers in this Colony, to use their influence in suppressing such Societies," which, were they allowed to increase, could not "fail to disturb the public peace, by creating animosities and feuds."<sup>30</sup> This was directed against both the Orangemen and the Ribbonmen<sup>31</sup> but had been prompted by the publication of the Orange Oath in an April 30, 1852, letter from a local Orangeman

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<sup>27</sup> For a summary of these issues see I.R. Robertson, "Religion," 82-90, 94-5, 165-7.

<sup>28</sup> A collection of some of these can be found in W.H. Pope, Romish Intolerance in Prince Edward Island. Charlottetown: The Protestant, 1862.

<sup>29</sup> Parliamentary Reporter, 1861, p 40.

<sup>30</sup> Minutes of Executive Council, May 6, 1852.

<sup>31</sup> A secret agrarian society of Irish Catholics who had a number of violent clashes with the Orangemen in Ireland in the early to mid nineteenth-century.

to the Islander newspaper. Although the Proclamation had no statutory basis, it did hinder the growth of Orangeism for the rest of the decade, a point specifically made by Edward Whelan in the House in 1863 when he said they “were afraid to acknowledge themselves.”<sup>32</sup>

The next three lodges were not formed until 1859, all in the Belfast District, with a fourth being organized there in February 1860. By 1862, when the Grand Orange Lodge of Prince Edward Island was established, there were 15, and 29 by 1864. The cause of their growth was not ethnicity but sectarianism: “Its members were mainly Scots and Englishmen, and their Orangeism was an expression of Protestant solidarity in the face of militant Catholicism.”<sup>33</sup> The first large celebration of July 12th was in 1860. Orange parades on the Island led to one significant riot (see below) but in general provoked only a rare minor skirmish.<sup>34</sup> By the twentieth century “it was becoming more lodge than Orange.”<sup>35</sup>

Controversy swirled around the Orange Lodge in the 1860s especially. The key figure in this was W. H. Pope who, for at least one year, was an Orangeman himself. His remarks later in a debate in the House reflect how deep and bitter the divide was in 1864:

I assert, Sir, that hatred of the Roman Catholic religion should be the feeling in the breast of every subject of her majesty. . . . were children educated to hate the Roman Catholic religion, it would be better for our land. . . . Were it not for the presence of Orangeism, who possess the physical power and determination to maintain their privileges and to keep down and punish Popish rowdyism, Irish papists, excited and incited by their Priests, would doubtless commit in this Island those acts of violence which they perpetrate wherever they are found.<sup>36</sup>

Pope’s most significant action in support of the Orange Order was in introducing, on March

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<sup>32</sup> Parliamentary Reporter, 1863, p 44.

<sup>33</sup> E. MacDonald, New Ireland, 19.

<sup>34</sup> See Peter McGuigan, “From Wexford and Monaghan: the Lot 22 Irish,” Abegweit Review (Winter 1985): 69; and “The Lot 61 Irish: Settlement and Stabilization,” Abegweit Review (Spring 1988): 46.

<sup>35</sup> E. MacDonald, New Ireland, 19.

<sup>36</sup> Parliamentary Reporter, 1864, pp 54, 58.

17, 1863, a Bill to establish it. It is hard to believe that he was unaware of the significance of choosing St Patrick's Day as the day to introduce this anti-Irish measure. The debate was caustic, Pope making reference to "lecherous old Popish priests" and saying "that a Catholic woman going to confess to a priest was the same as taking a mare to a stallion,"<sup>37</sup> though he qualified it by saying he was not making a slur on the mare. Pope made his motives for incorporating the Orangemen clear when he pointed out that the Catholic plurality in the Province under the Bishop's electioneering lead would always outvote the divided Protestants.<sup>38</sup> The bill passed following strict party lines, the Conservatives all being Protestants at this time, but the Catholics submitted a petition with 11,553 names on it, to have the Bill disallowed, and it was. In 1878 and 1880 bills to incorporate the Orange Lodges were again passed and again refused assent by two different Lieutenant Governors, the latter one being Heath Haviland, an Orangeman himself, who followed the advice of Catholic Premier W. W. Sullivan.

While Orangeism in New Brunswick was often associated with violence, on the Island the antagonisms were mainly verbal. Still there was one violent Orange-related event<sup>39</sup> on the Island, which ironically proved to be the event that ended its sectarian wars. This occurred on July 12, 1877, when Irish Catholics confronted the Orangemen in front of their lodge in Charlottetown as they returned from their annual picnic. There was some jostling and fighting between the two groups, stones were thrown and shots were fired. Remarkably only three people in the crowd were grazed by the bullets, and no one was

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<sup>37</sup> Parliamentary Reporter, 1863, p 55.

<sup>38</sup> See Parliamentary Reporter, 1863, p 49.

<sup>39</sup> There was extensive coverage of this incident and the subsequent trial in the local press: Examiner, July 13,14,16,18,19,23,27, 1877; Patriot, July 14, 1877; Presbyterian and Evangelical Protestant Union, July 19, 1877. The main secondary sources are: B. Beck 85-88; O'Grady 240-2; MacMillan, 1835-1891, pp 315-8; and Ryan O'Connor, "'You can beat us in the House of Assembly but you can't beat us in the street': The Symbolic Value of Charlottetown's Orange Lodge Riot" CCHA Historical Studies 72 (2006): 71-94.

seriously injured, except one Orangeman who got a severe wound on his head from a paving stone. The next day was a great day for gun sales in Charlottetown. That night the Orangemen went back to their Hall, raised their yellow flag, and had another meeting. The rowdies were waiting for them. This time the authorities did not repeat the mistake of Belfast. The police, a hundred newly sworn-in constables, and a company of the militia cavalry were there. Before a single stone could be thrown they arrested and jailed every “rowdie” in sight. During the night about 100 armed volunteers marched the streets but there were no incidents.

It must be asked why, after more than fifteen years of peaceful July 12th celebrations on the Island, a riot broke out in this particular year. On July 1 the Protestant backed government had just proclaimed its non-sectarian public school act, ending twenty-one years of educational battles that generally favoured the Protestants, and this riot seems to have been an outlet for their political frustration. This was well expressed by Nicholas Collins, one of the instigators of the riot, who in Court asserted: “Damn you, you can beat us in the House of Assembly but you can’t beat us in the street.”<sup>40</sup>

Amazingly the riot did not result in any long term bitterness between the two groups and in fact is best seen as the final event in the Island’s sectarian wars. That it had a peaceful rather than violent denouement seems due to three factors: first, the school wars were over, the Public School Act having passed just a dozen days earlier; second, the authorities responded appropriately and decisively to the mob action (this I take to be the main factor); and, third, the leadership on both sides denounced the violence. Boyde Beck commented that:

It can be considered the last real battle in the Island’s wars of religion. Though they reserved the right to dislike and mistrust each other well into the following century, Protestants and Catholics resisted the temptation to employ rocks, axe

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<sup>40</sup> Examiner, July 18, 1877. I am indebted to Ryan O’Connor (pp 93-94) for this insight.

handles and pistols in their theological discourses.<sup>41</sup>

The school questions were resolved, the political parties were back to their old selves with sectarian issues buried well beneath the surface, and the bitter wrangling and occasional physical violence of the previous thirty years were over. P.E.I.'s sectarian wars are bookended by one deadly Protestant - Catholic battle and a second one in which deaths were avoided by the strong and wise intervention of the authorities. The first battle led to a situation where political parties became divided by sect, the peaceful denouement of the second may have permitted the two sides to finally feel they no longer needed to cling to their ancient tribal groupings in order to feel safe. The Protestant - Catholic divide on the Island, however, was not ended. It simply went underground in the form of gentlemen's agreements that would colour Island life for almost another century.

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<sup>41</sup> B. Beck 120.

# PART III

“Gentlemen’s Agreements”

1877-1966

## CHAPTER 10

### INTRODUCTION

They seemed to me an ancient folk,  
like persons from a different age –  
which they were. . . .  
With their stories  
and talk  
they beckoned me back,  
back to a world they called  
“them times.” . . .  
Back to a time  
of separating cream from milk,  
chaff from grain,  
and Protestants from Catholics.<sup>1</sup>

Following the embittered religious conflicts centred on the school questions and the peaceful denouement of the Orange Day Riot, the relations between Catholic and Protestant on Prince Edward Island significantly changed. No longer would there be violence and only rarely impassioned words, but that does not mean the two communities dwelt together in harmony. Each group let the other live but for the most part it was two solitudes living “side by each.” Catholics and Protestants learned to accommodate each other, but typically were careful not to associate too closely with each other.

In stating all this, however, we must maintain a balance. There are two opposite errors one can fall into when discussing the divide between Catholics and Protestants on P.E.I. in the century following the end of the school battles. The first would be to assume that the two groups were in a state of nearly constant hostility towards each other, and the second to assume that the divide was little more than just two communities having different

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<sup>1</sup> David Weale, Them Times (Charlottetown: Institute of Island Studies, 1992), 115.

interests but generally living quite amicably with one another. While we must avoid the temptation of over stressing the distrust and conflict, we must affirm that there was a significant divide. Most of my examples will be to illustrate the divide but I will also balance this with examples of friendship and co-operation to try to avoid painting the picture darker than it really was.

### Elite Accommodation or Gentlemen's Agreements

The period from the final settling of the school battles in 1877 until the opening of Colonel Gray High School in Charlottetown in September of 1966 was a time when gentlemen's agreements defined the interaction of the two faith communities. Gordon Cobb speaks of this as elite accommodation, a process which "involves co-operation between the elites of a divided community"<sup>2</sup> within a society that has a stable leader and follower structure, so that agreements negotiated by the elites are acquiesced in by the followers. It often occurs in communities seriously divided by matters such as language, ethnicity or religion. The leaders of the sub-groups make legal and / or gentlemen's agreements in order to avoid open conflict between the groups. The political system in Lebanon, where patronage is divided among eighteen religious groups, would be an extreme example of this, Newfoundland a Canadian example.<sup>3</sup>

Cobb asserted that "proportionality penetrate[d] all aspects of institutional life on the Island - town councils, government departments, the awarding of contracts, staff in modern schools and hospitals, and the list goes on."<sup>4</sup> The goal of this on P.E.I. was "to

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<sup>2</sup> Gordon Cobb, "The Formation of U.P.E.I.: An Example of Elite Accommodation Theory in Its Last Days on P.E.I." (B.A. Thesis, U.P.E.I., 1986), 1.

<sup>3</sup> See p 199.

<sup>4</sup> Cobb 12.



ensure religious harmony and to preserve political stability,”<sup>5</sup> all necessitated by the sectarian wars described in the previous chapter. “After the climax of the school question in the 1870s, religious antagonisms and demands went underground, and were manifested in educational, social, parish and political segregation on the Island. Denominational demands were satisfied by backroom gentlemen’s agreements; church politics was exempt from public discussion.”<sup>6</sup> Sectarian feelings did not disappear in 1877, they were just more effectively managed: “A generation of politico-religious strife had given way in the 1870s to a fragile denominational harmony on Prince Edward Island. But currents of prejudice and resentment simmered just beneath the surface of an Island society dominated by parallel Catholic and Protestant institutions.”<sup>7</sup>

These gentlemen’s agreements have a veneer of tolerance and peace about them, such that even a noted historian like A. H. Clark commented in 1959: “The Island presents to the rest of North America a remarkable example of bi-lingual and bi-doctrinal harmony and mutual tolerance.”<sup>8</sup> Yet while the gentlemen’s agreements were an improvement over the bitter wars of the mid-1800s let us not forget they were an accommodation arrived at in order to temper the harsh feelings between the two groups, and that generally the relations were not that of warm friendship but of distance and suspicion.<sup>9</sup>

The attitudes and values that Protestants and Catholics brought to this attempt to

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid 2.

<sup>6</sup> W. MacKinnon, Party, 76.

<sup>7</sup> James C. McGuigan, “The Cardinal and the Island,” Island Magazine 36 (Fall/Winter 1994): 27.

<sup>8</sup> Andrew Hill Clark, Three Centuries and the Island (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), 211. Three sociologists also speak very highly of the religious tolerance displayed by Islanders. See John Angus Weir, “Rural Reconstruction in Prince Edward Island: An Evaluation” (PhD diss, University of Notre Dame, 1964), 68-9; Sylvia Anthony and Enid Charles, “Population Trends in Relation to the Social Background on Prince Edward Island,” Geographical Review, vol XXXII (Oct 1942): 545-61. See p 215 for a quote related to this.

<sup>9</sup> Cf MacIntyre 92.

balance power in the province were not the same and as a result the balance was almost always weighted in favour of the Protestant side. This was grounded in two realities, the small majority (55-45%) the Protestant community possessed,<sup>10</sup> and the fact that this was a British colony and therefore it was right and natural that Protestants would dominate politically. The idea of the Protestant ascendancy, so prevalent in Northern Ireland, was also the assumed stance on P.E.I. Protestants took this to be the natural order of things. The Catholic community meanwhile, with its history of having been a 'subdued' people in the United Kingdom and in Acadia, fell quite naturally into the secondary slot. This order of things became entrenched at the beginning of this period when the gentlemen's agreement on separate schools was established by Bishop McIntyre and Premier Davies.<sup>11</sup> McIntyre's intention seems to have been to create a sort of Catholic bubble within a Protestant-dominated society in which they could function without being 'contaminated' by excessive contact with Protestants. Generally Catholics were content as long as they received a fairly reasonable share of the political patronage. The basic rule that governed Protestant-Catholic relations in this period, which allowed both sides the security they desired, was that power would be fairly evenly shared but nearly always slightly tilted in the Protestants' favour.

The same process of elite accommodation was used to settle the religious, educational and political sparring in the other Atlantic Provinces. Nova Scotia established a free, non-sectarian, school system in 1864 but could not afford to build new schools so they had to incorporate the existing Catholic school buildings into the public system. A clause was therefore added to the school act in 1865 that gave permission for the trustees to

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<sup>10</sup> The impact of population can be seen in Newfoundland. In the 1830s and 1840s Catholics formed about half of the population and during this period controlled the government but as they decreased in ratio so did they decrease in political influence.

<sup>11</sup> See p 203ff.

accept any Catholic school into its system. Premier Charles Tupper also made a written agreement with Bishop Connolly that within Halifax Catholic education would be protected and gave verbal assurances to the same end for the rest of the province. The religious teaching was to be delivered after hours. While less than what the Catholic hierarchy had hoped for, this effectively amounted to having separate Catholic schools controlled and operated by the secular school board.<sup>12</sup> This segregation ended in 1954. A similar agreement was reached in New Brunswick after the Caraquet riots in 1875.<sup>13</sup> The segregation there came to an end with school consolidation in 1967. Newfoundland, due to its highly volatile and long lasting mix of religion, education and politics, made elite accommodation almost into a science, and had to adequately divide patronage among three groups, Catholics, Anglicans and Methodists. Even some of the smaller sects, the Pentecostals, Seventh Day Adventists and Salvation Army, were granted their own separate schools. Their separate school system came to an end in 1997. Elite accommodation was a fact of life in Atlantic Canada (and in every other province as well), but its expression in each area exhibited local peculiarities. Part of the value of the detailed exploration, in this Part, of how accommodation worked itself out on the Island, is that it brings to light its local nuances and in turn provides a detailed body of material for comparing and contrasting how the same approach was manifested in other locales.

### Source Material

Not much has been written specifically on the relations between the Catholic and Protestant communities on P.E.I. during this period. There is plenty written on specific denominations, individual churches and various communities, and specific episodes are dealt

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<sup>12</sup> See Fay Trombley, "Thomas Louis Connolly: An Archbishop's Role in Politics," in Murphy and Byrne; and Xavier.

<sup>13</sup> See p 111.

with in various histories, but the relations between the two faiths (whether for better or worse) are mostly by-passed. The closest any Island author has come to tackling Protestant - Catholic relations head-on is John Eldon Green in his recent autobiography.<sup>14</sup> Historian David Weale has also addressed the issue at an anecdotal and personal level, with his whimsical recounting of Island foibles,<sup>15</sup> and a few political and educational historians have also addressed aspects of the accommodation exhibited in their fields.<sup>16</sup> Islanders have for the most part assumed that the less committed to ink and paper about the tensions between the two sects the better.

Source material for the topic is, therefore, limited, and it impacts the portrayal of both the positive and negative in Catholic-Protestant relations. Negative events tend to get a lot more press than positive ones, news and history being what they are, so most of the material in the Island histories and newspapers is apt to focus on the conflicts between the two communities. While this skews the history in one direction, it also can get skewed in the opposite way. One might assume the divide was not there or relatively insignificant due to the paucity of references to it. Even in the general histories the conflicts are very far apart, and decades pass without mention of anything negative in the relations between the Island's two main religious groupings. One could conclude that all was well during these periods, but not only would it then be hard to explain the sudden flare-ups of sectarian feelings, it would also miss all the hidden things, the attitudes that are in the air but hard to pin down.

Just as good feelings between groups tend to get missed in 'histories' so do the

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<sup>14</sup> Green, Mind.

<sup>15</sup> See David Weale, Them Times, 51,108; A Long Way from the Road. The Wit and Wisdom of Prince Edward Island (Charlottetown: Acorn Press, 1998), 35-9,45,85,106-7,110; Overheard on the Island (Charlottetown: Tangle Lane, 2003); Whatever You Say (Charlottetown: Tangle Lane, 2005), 43-58; Lord Have Mercy (Charlottetown: Tangle Lane, 2009).

<sup>16</sup> See footnotes in chapters 11 and 13 below.

underlying prejudices, the suspicions and fears, the ‘keep them at a safe distance’ attitudes.

This was John Maloney’s point when he said:

You can’t understand what occurred unless you had imbibed the climate of the time. That was a climate that meant that your society was so structured that people could separate themselves into two groups . . . They were forced to develop a *modus vivendi* for doing that. The way it was done . . . was to pretend that it didn’t exist. Because in that way you got rid of the cognitive dissonance of having this situation in your mind which was unpleasant . . . you had to blank it out in some way or another.<sup>17</sup>

But how do you discover something which people pretended did not exist? Part of our goal will be to try and imbibe the climate of the times in an attempt to reflect accurately both the positive and negative in the relations between the two communities.

While many books and articles have been researched in preparing this chapter most of the material will be drawn from oral histories, both that collected by students in Dr David Weale’s classes and that collected by me in formal interviews, in informal conversations, from students’ research in my courses, and from emails and letters Islanders have sent to me.<sup>18</sup> My goal is not to give a complete critical history of this period but a taste of how Catholics and Protestants related to each other on the ground, in their day-to-day lives, organizing the material on a thematic basis. Any oral material I have included I am confident is historically sound, though it was not possible to thoroughly analyse the

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<sup>17</sup> The Making of a University, unreleased video-cassette produced by the U.P.E.I. Audio-Visual Department for their 25th Anniversary celebrations, 1994. Dr Maloney came to the Island in 1949.

<sup>18</sup> The interviews and papers done by my students, and some of the materials I collected and interviews I conducted, can be found in “Protestant - Catholic Relations on P.E.I.: The Beck Collection,” hereinafter referred to as “BColl.” The interviews done by students in Dr Weale’s class, from 1974-2005, are in a binder entitled “The Weale Collection of Oral History on P.E.I. Vol I: Protestant - Catholic Relations,” hereinafter referred to as “WColl.” I have indexed them all and numbered them. The system used is date, paper, page. So 83B2 means it was written in 1983, is the second paper catalogued for that year, and the quote is found on page 2 of that paper. If it begins with something like 80s it means it was written in the eighties. Some codes start with letters (such as Ps), the meanings of which are insignificant for our purposes, and the precise date of which are unknown. Both of these binders are currently with their authors but are destined for the P.E.I. Special Collections at U.P.E.I.

accuracy of the accounts in the “Weale Collection.” Most of them seemed to be sound but it was also clear that a small number of the reports displayed more of the nature of urban legends or folk stories, than eyewitness accounts. Also some of the seniors saw no reason to let the facts ruin a good story. Even, however, if a story was not always strictly factual it does express something of the attitudes of the times. These caveats aside it is important to note that the vast majority of the reports are from reliable eye-witnesses and there appears to be no reason to doubt their credibility.<sup>19</sup> Another factor I should note in my recounting of the stories is that I have sometimes replaced the name of the interviewee with a more generic reference to their religion and sometimes their home community, and also I have not mentioned the names of the many interviewers in the “Weale Collection.” Part of the reason for this was to not clutter the analysis with names when these are immaterial to the argument, and the other part was to protect the sources. The names of interviewers and interviewees can be easily accessed in the “Weale Collection.”

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<sup>19</sup> For further discussion on this see p 20.

## CHAPTER 11

### EDUCATION

#### Origins of the Gentlemen's Agreements

The social institution in which the gentlemen's agreements were most manifest was also the one that was most responsible for their creation and nurturing -- the school system. John Eldon Green correctly stated that the divide was all a legacy of the school questions of the 1850s-70s and the Catholic desire to have separate schools after 1877: "Incredibly, 100 years later, life in Charlottetown was still controlled by the after-effects of that religious tempest, as was the political life of the province and its government. . . . The separate school system was the anchor barrier to any full sense of community,"<sup>1</sup> and "the underpinning for everything else that was wrong about the capital city."<sup>2</sup>

Green used the phrase 'separate school system' knowing full well that legally and officially P.E.I. had a public, non-denominational system; it was just that the practice in most communities did not follow the theory. Liberal Premier Louis Davies had effectively led the fight to ensure that the Island retained a non-sectarian school system, and the Conservative Catholic Premier who succeeded him, W. W. Sullivan, reinforced that decision. So how did the Island go so quickly from that legal reality to a *de facto* separate structure? Part of the explanation was that up to that point most public schools were predominantly Catholic or Protestant, as a consequence primarily of the geographic divide

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<sup>1</sup> Green 146-7.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid 144.

in rural areas (this most pronouncedly the case with the Acadian schools) and the formation of religious schools in the towns (i.e., the Bishop's private schools in Charlottetown, Summerside and Miscouche and the Wesleyan Academy in Charlottetown). Part of it was that Bishop McIntyre was determined to get separate schools by one means or another. Part of it was that a pattern of gentlemen's agreements in education had already been established during the previous decade.

The beginning of elite accommodation on the Island occurred around appointments to the Charlottetown School Board. This seven man Board in July 1859, in the heat of the first education war, went from having two Catholics to having none. Four of the seven Protestants were clergymen who had been at the Great Protestant Meeting of 1857. The Conservatives made a couple of offers in 1860 and 1861 to get two Catholic clergymen on the Board but they were rejected as being inadequate representation for nearly 50% of the population. This was rectified in 1868 when the Charlottetown Board of Education was enlarged to eleven, and five of these spots were reserved for Catholics. Also the School Inspectors were increased to three and one of the appointees had to be a Catholic. In the same year Father Angus MacDonald (rector of SDC) was appointed one of the two examiners of teaching candidates and the Normal School was no longer deemed compulsory for licencing teachers.

These accommodations were the precursors to the Island's most significant gentlemen's agreement, which established its *de facto* separate school system. Soon after Davies passed his education bill, in July 1877, the school trustees of St Patrick's (the Catholic boys school in Charlottetown) and the newly formed Charlottetown School Board held discussions on how that school might function in the new public system. Section 88 (m) of the Act had already provided for the rental of denominational school facilities, in Charlottetown and Summerside, provided there was no religious instruction during school



hours. Davies and the Bishop then met on September 18, 1877, and agreed to five points:

- (1) Catholic children were to attend Catholic schools;
- (2) Catholic teachers were to be selected by the Bishop and then recommended to the School Board for appointment;
- (3) Schools would follow the Provincial schedule. Religious instruction could be held before or at the end of the school day, but no one was to be forced to attend such instruction whose parents might object;
- (4) Nuns, on producing a certificate of capacity from their "parent house," would receive a license to teach;
- (5) Catholics were to have representation on the Charlottetown Board of School Trustees.<sup>3</sup>

The main point of disagreement was item # 1 but it immediately became the practice. Item # 5 worked out as follows, a beautiful example of elite accommodation. The City appointed three trustees, two of whom were always Catholic, while the government appointed four, one of whom was always Catholic. So the Protestants always maintained a slim 4-3 majority, from 1877 until the Board was disbanded in 1972. On December 14, 1877, Bishop McIntyre wrote a letter to the Charlottetown School Board that he was willing to make renovations to St Patrick's School and place it under them, but he added "four words that were destined to have lasting effects until relatively recent times,"<sup>4</sup> the words being, "as at present conducted."<sup>5</sup> The following January the school was opened as a boys' school under its new name, Queen's Square School, a non-sectarian public school that had only Catholic staff and Catholic students.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> A mostly verbatim summary of Bishop McIntyre to Premier Davies, Sept 18, 1877, cited by Thomas Bradley, A History of Queen Square School (Summerside: Williams and Cruce, 1991), 53.

<sup>4</sup> R.G. Lea, The Schools of Charlottetown (Charlottetown: P.E.I. Collection, 1991), 6. Dr Lea was Chair of the Board of Education from 1950-72.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> For a complete list of the primary documents related to this matter see I.R. Robertson, "Religion," 311 (n 12).

## Accommodation in the Public School System

From that point on most schools on the Island were either Catholic or Protestant / public. In the rural areas a school's denominational status followed that of the community. As most areas were predominantly one faith or the other this was a fairly straightforward process. Toronto Road (a few kilometres from North Rustico), for example, had about forty households in the 1920s and 1930s and all were Catholic. Their one-room school had Catholic teachers, trustees, prayers, hymns and statues, and each school day began with the catechism.<sup>7</sup> It in fact could not have been any more Catholic if Bishop McIntyre had attained his separate school system. Roger Henry informed me that catechism was taught at Stella Maris in North Rustico during school hours when he taught there in 1982, and he, as a Protestant, was assigned to sit with the Protestant children (about 10% of the students) who were excused from these classes.<sup>8</sup> Catechism continued to be taught in school hours in some English Catholic high schools until about 1989, Fort Augustus probably being the last school to end this practice.<sup>9</sup> The Acadian schools were even more Catholic than the English-speaking schools.<sup>10</sup>

The "Protestant / public schools" were not as visibly Protestant as the "Catholic schools" were Catholic, but it was easier for the Catholics to see their Protestant tinge and bias than it was for the Protestants. This Protestant flavour was manifested first in the Protestant numerical dominance in the school, from trustees to pupils to teachers. Most significant was the fact that the latter were nearly always Protestants. Catholic Francis Blanchard served as school inspector in 1962-3 and was called to a meeting of school

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<sup>7</sup> Inez Doiron of Mayfield, interview by author, Oct 12, 2007. Inez was raised on the Toronto Rd.

<sup>8</sup> Roger Henry of Stanley Bridge, conversation with author, Mar 21, 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Bob Gray of Charlottetown, conversation with author, Mar 31, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> See G. Arsenault, *Island Acadians*, 237.

trustees in a Charlottetown suburb. The purpose of it was to make plans for finding a new teacher: "I was told, in no uncertain terms, that I was not to suggest the names of any Catholic nor, furthermore, any Acadian candidates. If I remember well, I think I let them do all the searching."<sup>11</sup> The Protestant flavour also came out in that whatever religion was promulgated was Protestant, whether it was Bible readings being done from the King James Version or the Lord's Prayer being said in the Protestant way.

In religiously mixed communities there would often be two schools, like the Anglo-Rustico schools<sup>12</sup> which started in South Rustico. One informant who attended the Catholic school there (*ca* mid-twentieth century) "recalled with a smile that the boys used to 'jump the fence' at noontime and go for a good fight with the Protestant boys and vice versa."<sup>13</sup> Oyster Bed Bridge was Catholic but the surrounding communities Protestant. It had two schools, only a field apart, but they had no interaction with each other except at vaccination time. They did not fight but mostly just ignored each other.<sup>14</sup> In the small farming community of Mayfield there were two one-room schools within a quarter of a mile of each other, St Ignatius (Catholic) and Mayfield (Protestant/Public). A centennial history of the area noted that the residents were Scottish Protestants and French Catholics, and "for this reason there were two separate schools."<sup>15</sup> Like Oyster Bed they undertook no common activities together though there does not seem to have been any real animosity either.

A comparison between Mayfield and nearby Stanley Bridge in the first half of the

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<sup>11</sup> Francis C. Blanchard of Charlottetown, letter to author, Oct 12, 2007. Contained in "BColl."

<sup>12</sup> For more on these schools see D.I. McGuigan 53-5, 151-4.

<sup>13</sup> "WColl" 82M3.

<sup>14</sup> Nancy Corney (nee Ling) of Oyster Bed Bridge, conversation with author, Nov 16, 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Through the Years. The Women's Institute on Prince Edward Island 1913-63, 1936-72 (St Ignatius's Women Institute, 1973), 33. The history of the St Ignatius and Toronto Road schools can be found in this inappropriately named book.

twentieth-century nicely illustrates how the school system affected the sense of community. Stanley Bridge had roughly an equal number of Protestants and Catholics, and the relations between them were quite good. One's best friend was as likely to be of the opposite faith group as they were to be of the same, and the Women's Institute was mixed.<sup>16</sup> Catholics even celebrated the July 12th parade, "though they felt they could do without the white horse."<sup>17</sup> In Mayfield the children did not mix nearly as much and there were two Women's Institutes, one for each school. The cause of this difference is not hard to ascertain. The mixed school in the former mingled the children and they naturally developed friendships with each other, while the separate schools in Mayfield enabled the two groups to remain isolated from each other.

In other mixed communities with only one school they used gentlemen's agreements to maintain the peace. In Stanley Bridge there were always two Protestant school trustees and one Catholic, while in Rennies Road they did it 'turn about,' the Protestants being the majority in one term and the Catholics the next. If they had a one room school the practice was to alternate between Protestant and Catholic teachers, while if they had two rooms, such as in Augustine Cove, they often hired a teacher of each faith.<sup>18</sup> In Albany the Protestant teacher always got the "big room," the principalship and the higher grades to teach.<sup>19</sup> Some larger towns like Montague, Kensington and Georgetown were big enough to be religiously mixed but not big enough to have the luxury of separate school buildings. It is in these communities where the divide was the weakest, because the Protestant and Catholic children grew up as friends in school.

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<sup>16</sup> George MacEwan of Stanley Bridge, conversation with author, Mar 9, 2008.

<sup>17</sup> P. McGuigan, "Lot 22," p 69.

<sup>18</sup> For these three communities see "WColl" 83A4 and 80sU2. Cf also 80sW4.

<sup>19</sup> John Eldon Green, interview by Helen MacDonald, 1972, contained in Dr Malcolm N. Beck, The Collected Papers of Dr Malcolm N. Beck. Vol IV: The Social Activist (Charlottetown: by the author, 2001), 2127.

The educational divide was most prominent in the two cities, Summerside and Charlottetown. In the latter, up until the 1950s, most schools went from grades 1-10 with the senior high school years being covered by PWC and SDU. The Protestant schools were Prince Street (formerly the Wesleyan Academy and purchased by the School Board in 1877) and West Kent (begun in 1877). In 1954 Queen Charlotte High School was opened (Grades 7-10) and these two schools became elementary schools.

The Catholic school for boys was Queen's Square (1878-1962), formerly known as St Patrick's (1870-8) and replaced by St Jean Elementary in 1962. Tex MacDonald, who started attending there in 1954, said "there was no such thing as having a Protestant in your class back then, it was strictly Catholic . . . [and] for all practical purposes a Catholic boys' school."<sup>20</sup> He, and many others, recalled the priest who would visit the classes and slap or strap anyone who had missed Sunday School the previous week. Rochford Square was the girls' school, being publically funded from 1917-75, but prior to that was the private girls' school St Joseph's Convent (1864-1916). Birchwood High was opened in 1958 (Grades 7-10) and had both boys and girls, but they were completely segregated from each other. After it was opened the other two schools became elementary ones. There was also the private girls' school Notre Dame (1857-1971).

Everyone was expected to go to their own denominational school and for the few who did not the pressure was sometimes intense. Francis Blanchard went to the denominationally mixed Model School in the 1940s rather than Queen's Square, and for punishment a priest refused to train him in how to serve Mass.<sup>21</sup> Dr Harry Callaghan noted: "I lived a block away from Prince Street and went to Queen's Square. I was even closer to West Kent than I was to Queen's Square. . . . There was maybe one or two Protestant

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<sup>20</sup> Tex MacDonald of Charlottetown, interview by Ellen Whitrow, April 2007, contained in "BColl."

<sup>21</sup> Blanchard letter.

families at Queen's Square and everyone would shake their heads and wonder how they got there."<sup>22</sup>

At the two High Schools (grades 7-10) 98% of the students were of the dominant faith and the same was basically true in each of the elementary schools. The staff was even more uniform. Prior to 1966 all the staff at all of these schools were of the dominant faith, and in the Catholic schools many were nuns.<sup>23</sup> This was not accidental. When Mary Green applied for a position with the Charlottetown School Board in 1948 the secretary-manager wrote ROMAN CATHOLIC in block letters on her application, thus excluding her from the two public / Protestant schools. In the end she was hired by the mixed Spring Park Elementary school.<sup>24</sup> Protestant Wendell Horton, who later became the first principal at Colonel Gray High school, said that when he went in to apply for his first teaching position the School Board secretary said to him, "You're a Protestant are ya?" After he nodded assent she responded, "Alright then you'll go to Prince Street."<sup>25</sup> This hiring divide started to break down with the founding of Colonel Gray Senior High in 1966 but even there concern was taken to distribute the jobs equitably. Principal Horton said he was careful to choose a Catholic Vice Principal and one Catholic and one Protestant guidance counsellor, and the teachers as well were about half and half.<sup>26</sup>

The only non-sectarian school in the city was Spring Park Elementary. It was located in an area recently incorporated into the city and so did not have Charlottetown's

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<sup>22</sup> Dr Harry Callaghan of Charlottetown, interview by author, Mar 3, 2005,

<sup>23</sup> John Blanchard, "A Historical Development of the Education System of Charlottetown" (Honours Thesis, U.P.E.I., 1966-7), 136-42. While this study was done in 1965 there is nothing to suggest that the proportions were significantly different in the preceding eighty years.

<sup>24</sup> Green 144-5.

<sup>25</sup> Wendell Horton of Charlottetown, interview by Ellen Whitrow, April 2007, contained in "BColl."

<sup>26</sup> See *ibid* and Maureen Coady of Charlottetown, interview by Chantal Coady, April, 2007, contained in "BColl."

historical sectarian baggage, not becoming part of the Charlottetown School Board until 1958. Its student population was roughly half and half but its staff was precisely 50% Catholic and 50% Protestant.<sup>27</sup> The gentlemen's agreement there wore a different expression than it did in the city but it was still very much alive. Sociologically, however, there was very little sense of a friendship divide felt among the young people.<sup>28</sup> This was due both to the young people growing up in a mixed area religiously (the Spring Park community in the 1960s was a growing suburb that reflected the newfound upward mobility among Catholics), and attending a religiously mixed school together where gentlemen's agreements ensured there was no religious rivalry at the professional level.

When this is contrasted with the situation in the city proper, the immense social ramifications of the sectarian bifurcation are clearly seen: "Group activities for city children and youth were thus organized on either a school or a parish / congregational basis . . . children grew up forging friendships mainly with people of their own faith, and knowing those of other religions mainly as opponents in sports and other competitive events."<sup>29</sup>

Mike Duffy recalled:

I left the Island in 64. My personal memories are of living at 11 Villa Avenue in "Brighton"; and walking to Roman Catholic schools, Queen's Square, and later at Birchwood High School and St. Dunstan's. As a teenager, it was a bit weird walking against the tide. As we walked to school, we met people from the other side of town walking to Queen Charlotte. It was strange, we lived 2 or 3 blocks from West Kent / Queen Charlotte, but we went to school across town. Then we came home and played neighbourhood football, baseball and hockey with our neighbours, but could not share school loyalties or experiences. It wasn't traumatic, just a bit strange.<sup>30</sup>

Duffy's story of walking across town and seeing the other group going in the opposite

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<sup>27</sup> J. Blanchard 142.

<sup>28</sup> Based on about a dozen conversations with people who were raised in this area in the 1950s and 1960s, including Betty Anne Younker (fall 2005), whose best friend was a Catholic girl and who did not recall any divide in her area.

<sup>29</sup> Green 145.

<sup>30</sup> Mike Duffy of Ottawa, email to Callum Beck, Aug 21, 2006.

direction has been repeated to me numerous times, and depending on the character there were also references to the occasional fist fights that took place as these “tribal enemies” passed each other, along with taunting and sneers related to sports and even religion.<sup>31</sup> His experience of returning home and playing with his Protestant neighbours is not as common. Father Charles Cheverie grew up on Water St and said “we had two communities living within one block” who did not socialize together, but who instead formed opposing gangs on the basis of their religion.<sup>32</sup> While the latter is probably the more common experience there was not a monolithic reality in regard to friendships in Charlottetown.

### The Two Colleges

The divide was just as apparent at the level of higher education. St Andrew’s College (1831-44), later Saint Dunstan’s College, though open to people of all faiths, was formed by Catholics to provide a Catholic education for children and prepare some for the priesthood. In 1836 the non-sectarian Central Academy was opened. Its founding act stipulated that “no religious test whatever shall be used in the said Academy, in order that the classes in the same may be free and open to all,” and that no clergyman “having the Spiritual charge of any Parish or Congregation” was eligible to be appointed Master in the Academy.<sup>33</sup> Even so the first two principals were Protestant clergymen – one can only assume they were not in charge of a congregation at the time. On May 1, 1860, the Central

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<sup>31</sup> Eric Kipping, who lived on P.E.I. as an adult but was raised in Cape Breton, noted this reality was not exclusive to the Island: “Where I grew up in school in Glace Bay we fought our way to school past the Catholics, and the Catholics fought their way back past us. They went to separate schools so we fought them.” He said he was friends with the Catholics who lived across the street but those a few blocks away “beat the hell out of us.” Still, when “they came to our school for Grade 12 we got along fine.” He felt the divide was stronger in Glace Bay than in Charlottetown (Eric Kipping of Saint John, interview by author, Sept 3, 2005).

<sup>32</sup> Father Charles Cheverie, interview by Ryan Gallant, April 4, 2007, contained in “BColl.”

<sup>33</sup> Acts of the General Assembly of Prince Edward Island, 1773-1834, (Charlottetown: James Haszard, 1834), 400-3.



Academy was raised to College level and re-named Prince of Wales College (PWC). There were no religious tests restricting admission, no religious instruction, no Bible-reading permitted even after class, and again no clergyman having charge of a congregation was eligible to teach there.

Though Prince of Wales was designed to be a non-sectarian institution it was perceived by both faith groups as a Protestant institution. This last point is a very sensitive issue. Ian Brown, professor of history at PWC in the 1960s, makes a convincing case for the secular nature of the school in his time. He noted that it prohibited proselytization, that clergy who were in charge of a parish were not allowed to teach there, and it had no religious studies. It had Catholic administrators, professors (even priests on occasion) and students. It had both Protestant and Catholic student clubs. Protestant doctrines like sola scriptura, sola fidei and the priesthood of all believers were not taught there. He said he taught there as a secular historian in a secular institution: “I would not have taught in a Protestant school.”<sup>34</sup> College historian Marian Bruce also noted that in 1954 23% of the students and 30% of the teachers were Catholic.<sup>35</sup>

All of this is true, and especially so during the Frank MacKinnon era (1949-68), but having granted that it was still true that it was the Protestant school, if only “by virtue of the fact that the Catholics all attended the Catholic University, [such that] it became by default, almost, the Protestant school.”<sup>36</sup> The point is not that Catholics never taught or went there, but that it was established and dominated by Protestants, which “gets all sort of tied into the perception by much of the community of Catholics on P.E.I. that the Protestants controlled

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<sup>34</sup> Ian Brown of Stanley Bridge, interview by author, Dec 9, 2004.

<sup>35</sup> Marian Bruce, A Century of Excellence: Prince of Wales College, 1860-1969 (Charlottetown: Island Studies Press/ PWC Alumni Association, 2005), 178. See also her remarks on p 177.

<sup>36</sup> Making of a University.

the government, the Protestants controlled ‘official’ things on P.E.I.”<sup>37</sup> This ascendancy of Island Protestants was never more conspicuous than in the ‘Catholic free’ political party that established the College in 1860, but it was also manifest in the fact that all of its Principals were Protestant. To its end this Protestant control continued, as illustrated by the twenty member committee formed in 1962 to seek University status for the College. It had representatives from the five major Protestant sects on the Island but not a single Catholic, and when they lobbied government they “contacted only the Protestant legislators.”<sup>38</sup> Six years later, when the school was at its most vulnerable, support to save the college was sought from Protestant churches only.<sup>39</sup> President Frank MacKinnon likewise lobbied the Protestant clergy<sup>40</sup> and in his 1995 book castigated the Island’s Protestant clergy for not rallying to save the College!<sup>41</sup>

It is not hard then to understand why in Catholic eyes it was “nominally secular but *de facto* sectarian,”<sup>42</sup> This was their view from the very beginning when Whelan dubbed it “the new sectarian institution,”<sup>43</sup> and is still the view of many. In my course on this topic at the Seniors College of P.E.I. in the fall of 2007 half of the ten Island Catholics in the group said they saw it as the Protestant college and half just saw it as a public school for all Islanders. Many Protestants, however, also saw it as the Protestant school. David Weale, an Islander who attended there while Dr Brown was teaching, when asked his perception on

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> M.N. Beck of Charlottetown, interview by Helen MacDonald, June, 1970, on a computer file in the author’s possession.

<sup>39</sup> See M.N. Beck interview, in M.N. Beck, Social Activist, 2098.

<sup>40</sup> Canon Robert Tuck of Charlottetown, conversation with author, Feb 16, 2005; and Henry Tye of Charlottetown, interview by author, Feb 16, 2005.

<sup>41</sup> See F. MacKinnon, Church Politics, 59.

<sup>42</sup> E. MacDonald, SDU, 78.

<sup>43</sup> Examiner, May 1, 1860. MHA George Howlan made the same point (Parliamentary Reporter, 1868, p 164, Summerside Progress, Apr 13, 1868).

the issue, replied:

That I am in a Protestant institution, no question about it. . . . I didn't have much sense that it was a Protestant institution in the sense that it would have been promulgating Protestantism. It wasn't Protestant in that way; it was just where the Protestants went. I have this whole tribal analogy for the two religions and that was definitely Protestant tribal territory. . . . You just had a feel. I'm telling you there were zones, and that was a Protestant zone, and if a Catholic was there at Prince of Wales they would have known the whole time they were there . . . they weren't in their own zone.<sup>44</sup>

The answer to the question in the end is not either/or but both/and, and though logically the two answers appear mutually exclusive, in the lived reality of Island life they were not.

### Conclusion

Sociologists Anthony and Charles, in their studies of the 1940s, speak of the great tolerance that was exhibited between the two major sects on the Island, especially as compared to other places in North America. They maintained that in most of P.E.I., due to population patterns and the religiously unified school system, "All the children (with the exception of a small minority attending denominationally private schools), are educated together, and the teachers are likewise drawn from both the British and the French, the Protestant and the Roman Catholic sections of the population."<sup>45</sup> They further credited the non-sectarian school system as being the main cause of the mutual understanding and toleration seen there. While this was the case in a minority of Island communities, for the most part they simply got it wrong. Even though their statistical work was strong and they were aware of our legislation, their analysis failed to take into account the lived history of the people that can often only be gained through oral sources. They simply did not "imbibe" the culture, and perhaps were taken in by the Island's gentlemen's agreements which were quite effective in making everything seem more cordial than it really was.

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<sup>44</sup> Weale interview.

<sup>45</sup> Anthony and Charles, "Population Trends," 557.

More than anything else the gentlemen's agreement which allowed for the separation of children in the public schools according to their religion was the main factor in sustaining the ancient sectarian prejudices on P.E.I. As we shall see it was not until this division was directly confronted and overcome that the divide could truly be breached. The divide, however, was not restricted to the area of education but affected Island society at nearly all levels.

## CHAPTER 12

### MEDICAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES

The second area, after the school system, where an Islander most often noticed the divide was in medical services. In 1879 the Charlottetown Hospital (Catholic) was opened with twelve beds and staffed by six nuns. Though Bishop McIntyre had intended the Catholic Hospital to be open to people of “all creeds and nationalities”<sup>1</sup> this did not seem to satisfy the Protestants, so they held a meeting on March, 8, 1883, “For the purpose of establishing a hospital . . . on a non-sectarian basis.”<sup>2</sup> This became the P.E.I. Hospital, which opened in 1884. The initial planning meetings for this new venture were held at the YMCA and were attended by Protestant clergy and laymen. As there were two hospitals in Charlottetown so there were two schools of nursing.

“Relations between the two institutions vacillated from states of mutual suspicion and hostility, to benign mutual acceptance and to full co-operation when crises threatened either one. Relations tended to vary in accordance with those that existed between key people in both groups.”<sup>3</sup> While doctors in most cases worked in the hospital of their sect there were exceptions:

Increasing numbers of physicians practising in the Charlottetown area were taken on the staff of both hospitals and the custom gradually evolved that all doctors were given active staff status at one hospital, and courtesy staff appointments at the other, though quite frequently some doctors, particularly

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<sup>1</sup> *Archives of the Diocese of Charlottetown*, as cited by MacIntyre 95 (though it should be noted that this remark was made in 1886, after the P.E.I. Hospital had been built).

<sup>2</sup> Dr R.G. Lea, *Island Medicine: A Historical Review* (P.E.I. Medical Society, 1984), 88.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid* 91.

[specialists] were afforded active staff privileges in both hospitals . . . Dr S.R. Jenkins was [even] chief of staff of both hospitals at the same time.<sup>4</sup>

Thus doctors were enabled to serve their patients in the hospital of their choice. Harry Callaghan, a Catholic doctor who began his practice in 1968, said the doctors at the P.E.I. Hospital when he came were helpful, except for a few. Early in his career he went there and an older Protestant doctor cast the following aspersion: “You must have an important Catholic in here or a really poor Protestant.” He said sometimes they would almost threaten you over why you were looking after “a particular fellow.” Still he said that he never had a problem getting a bed at the P.E.I. Hospital due to religious discrimination.<sup>5</sup>

The vast majority of patients had very decided preferences when it came to which hospital they chose to use. While some of this would have been based on practicalities related to chaplaincy services it ran far deeper than that. Columnist Syd Clay tells the story of his elderly Catholic neighbour who, sometime after World War II, cut his hand on a saw and came pounding on his door, the towel around his hand already soaked with blood. Mr Clay took him to the P.E.I. hospital, which was close by, and his neighbour said: “Not this one Syd, the other one!” Five precious minutes later they were at the Catholic hospital. Mr Clay commented that though he was too weak to walk in without assistance “there was no doubting the strength of his religious affiliation.”<sup>6</sup> Another person reported they were born in Charlottetown, 100 miles from their home in Prince County, but they drove past Summerside because it only had a ‘Protestant’ hospital.<sup>7</sup> An RCMP officer told me that often when he went to the scene of an accident in the late-1970s the injured person would

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid 89.

<sup>5</sup> Callaghan interview.

<sup>6</sup> Syd Clay, “Is He One of Us?” Voice for Island Seniors, Jan 2007, 5.

<sup>7</sup> “WColl” 83B2. Note this hospital, being mixed, had both Protestant and Catholic clergy ministering to the patients.

specify which hospital they wanted to be taken to.<sup>8</sup> In rural areas people did use doctors from the other group, if only because they often had no other choice, but when it came to referrals to a Charlottetown hospital the decision was nearly always made on sectarian grounds. In the 1950s and 1960s non-Catholics never amounted to more than 10% of patients at the Charlottetown Hospital.<sup>9</sup> The main reason for not going to the hospital of the same sect was if you had a big bill there or were being treated for a disease over which you might feel shame, such as alcoholism.<sup>10</sup>

The hospital and medical divide in Charlottetown was very intentionally and forcefully maintained. Catholic Ted Redmond recounted the time in the early-1960s that he took his wife to a Protestant GP, Al Saunders, for an operation at the P.E.I. Hospital, because Saunders told him 99% of his patients were there. Prior to the operation he had to overcome his mother-in-law's strenuous objections and afterwards was accosted on the street by a priest who challenged him: "What is she doing at P.E.I. Hospital, she should be at the Charlottetown."<sup>11</sup> Another man who moved from Ottawa to Charlottetown in 1966 phoned the Charlottetown Hospital to get an appointment with a doctor: "A lady on the phone asked me if we were Catholic. When I said no, she refused to talk with me."<sup>12</sup>

The mental hospital in Charlottetown was Falconwood (opened in 1879 and now called Hillsborough) and it was mixed. This did not, however, mean that sectarian issues were irrelevant there. Elite Accommodation was a fine-tuned science in regard to its hiring practices. David Berrigan was the resident historian for the hospital in the 1980s and informed me that "up until probably 1965 the hiring here at Hillsborough was done to

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<sup>8</sup> Lorne MacKinnon of Charlottetown, conversation with author, Oct 2007.

<sup>9</sup> Heidi MacDonald, 168-9 (n 26).

<sup>10</sup> Dr Ian MacMillan, interview by author, Mar 2, 2008. He practised in New Glasgow from 1955-60.

<sup>11</sup> Ted Redmond of Charlottetown, interview by author, Sept 3, 2005, in "Beck Collection."

<sup>12</sup> Michio Suzuki of Charlottetown, email to author, Oct 22, 2005.

ensure a balance between the Catholics and the Protestants.”<sup>13</sup> He had interviewed Dorethea Murchison, the wife of Dr. Alexander Murchison (the Island's first psychiatrist and medical superintendent at the hospital from 1935-61) about the history of the facility. Since it was a provincially-run institution political affiliation, not surprisingly, was a major determinant in who was hired; but religion played an even greater role. When a Catholic was hired for a position it meant that the next person hired had to be a Protestant, and this was never questioned. Dr Robert Forsythe, a psychiatrist at the hospital in the mid-1950s, confirmed Murchison's account. He told me that religion was “a very big factor in hiring, regardless of other qualifications,” and that positions were “very carefully divided,” even “precise,” in how they were parcelled out. He said there was “no spoken rule, just the way life was.”<sup>14</sup> Once hired, however, he was not aware of the staff having any conflicts related to religion. He also noted that great care was taken to ensure that Catholic patients were referred to Catholic doctors and the Catholic hospital, and Protestants to Protestant doctors and the Prince Edward Island Hospital, and that X-rays of patients were even sent to the appropriate religious facility to be read.

The divide also extended in Charlottetown to medical clinics, dentists and pharmacies, all of which generally were patronized by people of the same sect as the business owner. The Polyclinic (founded in 1925) had Protestant doctors, staff and a predominantly Protestant clientele, while the Charlottetown Clinic (1950-91) was founded by four Catholic physicians, had Catholic doctors, staff and a predominantly Catholic clientele.<sup>15</sup> In the 1970s a few from the other side started to trickle into each clinic, especially in the specialties. The doctors in each clinic seem, however, to have been on good terms with those in the other clinic, again especially in the specialties, though there

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<sup>13</sup> David Berrigan of Charlottetown, emails to author, Aug 30,31 2005.

<sup>14</sup> Dr Robert Forsythe of Charlottetown, interview by author, Feb 24, 2008.

<sup>15</sup> See J. Cyril Sinnott, A History of the Charlottetown Clinic (self published, 1975).



were a few ‘hard liners’ in each group.<sup>16</sup> In Summerside there was just one clinic, the Summerside Medical Centre, opened in the late-1940s. It had a fairly even mix of Catholic and Protestant doctors.<sup>17</sup> The two main factors which were probably at work in Summerside having only one clinic, compared to Charlottetown’s two, was that it had only one hospital and not a large enough population (about 6,000 people compared to Charlottetown’s approximately 15,000 in 1950) to make two viable.

A medical area where no divide seems to have been experienced was in the laboratories. Orlo Jones took the first medical laboratory technologists’ course in 1948-9. Her training was in the Catholic Charlottetown Hospital and before going she said: “I was scared to death because I had never been in a Catholic hospital and I had never talked with a nun.” It turned out, however, to be the “most enjoyable experience I ever knew in my lab field,” and she loved both the hospital and the nuns.<sup>18</sup>

Not only were hospitals and physicians divided by sect but so were the social services organizations: “On Prince Edward Island . . . religious rivalries made it necessary to make carbon copies of every private charity.”<sup>19</sup> A Social Service Department was first established at the Charlottetown Hospital in 1931 by the Sisters of St Martha, to provide nursing care in homes and support the poor.<sup>20</sup> This was re-named the Catholic Family Services Bureau when they moved out of the hospital in 1942. The city did not support it because there was no Protestant counterpart, but when the Protestant Family Services Bureau was opened in the late-1950s both received partial funding. The same Sisters

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<sup>16</sup> Dr Colin MacMillan, interview by author, Feb 26, 2008.

<sup>17</sup> Ian Macmillan interview.

<sup>18</sup> Orlo Jones of Charlottetown, letter to the author, Sept 2005.

<sup>19</sup> Edward MacDonald, If You’re Stronghearted. Prince Edward Island in the Twentieth Century (Charlottetown: P.E.I. Heritage Foundation, 1996), 183.

<sup>20</sup> See Allan F. Macdonald, “The Past Fifty Years,” in Hennessy128, for an overview of their work, and Heidi MacDonald for a detailed look.

opened the Catholic Social Welfare Centre in Summerside in 1956, which later became the Family Services Bureau. Though most Nursing Homes were publicly sponsored, three were faith-based: the Sacred Heart Home (Catholic), Sunset Lodge (Salvation Army) and the Atlantic Baptist Home. Orphanages were also faith-based. St Vincent's (1910-61) was Catholic, while the Prince Edward Island Protestant Children's Home in Mt Herbert (1902-76) was founded by the Orange Order primarily for Protestant orphans. In the area of adoptions the *Adoptions Act* of 1910 stipulated that Catholic children could be placed only in Catholic homes and Protestant children in Protestant homes.<sup>21</sup>

The sectarian divide in medical and social services nicely illustrates the relations between the two main denominational groupings on the Island. Parallel institutions were established and almost everyone used the ones which were connected to their denomination. The exigencies of life, however, sometimes meant the divide could not be adhered to strictly. This was often the case in villages where there was usually just one doctor; in small towns which might have only one pharmacy or dentist; in Summerside which had only one medical clinic compared to Charlottetown's two; and in some medical services such as the specialties, medical laboratories, and the care of the aged and mentally ill. In some situations when group isolation could not be achieved, like hiring at the Mental Hospital and some medical training programs, gentlemen's agreements were put into place to carefully govern relations. The next chapter will look at an area where the Island's history mandated the necessity of thoroughly co-mingling the sects, which in turn meant that this was the area where elite accommodation was most rigidly practised.

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<sup>21</sup> See Heidi MacDonald, 371-88, for more detail on adoption practices.

## CHAPTER 13

### POLITICS

The sectarian wars of 1856-77 saw the Island's two parties divided by sect. The Catholics first supported the Liberals while the Protestants backed the Conservatives, but in 1870 their positions were inverted. There was a great need to remove the volatility of religious passions from the political arena and this was done by gentlemen's agreements that touched all levels of political life on the Island. They determined how many Catholics and Protestants got elected both Federally and Provincially, the religious make-up of the Provincial Cabinet, and how patronage was distributed, from the level of Lieutenant Governor to the hiring of door-keepers in the Legislature. Political historian Wayne MacKinnon asserted all that had changed on a political level with the ending of the 21 year battle over education was that:

Both political parties had now come to regard the school question as too politically-hot to handle . . . religion was banished to the backrooms, and it became . . . the object of a carefully-contrived criterion for the dispensation of patronage. Henceforth, no one was nominated, ran for parliament, or appointed to the courts, the cabinet, the civil service, or even Government House itself, without reference to his religious affiliation. . . . By tacit consent, both parties dropped religion as a public issue . . . It had not disappeared, nor was it any less vital; it was simply . . . no longer mentioned in public.<sup>1</sup>

One prime example of these backroom gentlemen's agreement revolved around the number of Catholics in the Provincial Cabinet. Out of the usual nine positions the Catholics were allotted a maximum of three (one of whom was generally also an Acadian), though it reached four under Walter Shaw in the first half of the 1960s. This proportion of Catholics

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<sup>1</sup> W. MacKinnon, Party, 60.

in the Cabinet reflected their proportion in the House, which was strictly governed by another unwritten convention.

In 1893 a new electoral system was put in place whereby each riding was a dual riding, electing both an Assemblyman (based on universal suffrage) and a Councillor (based on a modest property qualification). An unwritten “gentlemen’s agreement” grew up around this system, that ensured the minority Catholics they would always have a decent representation in the House, but also assured the Protestants they would continue to maintain the ascendancy. For example if one party ran a Catholic as an Assemblyman then the other party would follow suit, and the Councillor seat would be reserved for two Protestants. There was no one-to-one correspondence between the Assemblyman and Councillor positions and one’s faith; all that was essential was that people of the same faith were running against each other. One would assume from this arrangement that you would then have 15 Protestants and 15 Catholics in each House, but the numbers were almost always 21-9. The reason for this is that six ridings fielded only Protestant candidates. On a rare occasion the conventions were not followed but “the candidate who departed from the ‘proper’ religion on the ballot was almost invariably defeated.”<sup>2</sup>

“Paradoxically, this ‘gentlemen’s agreement’ . . . was designed to ‘keep religion out of politics,’ and yet, by its very nature, it managed to place religion in a very central and dominant role in political life.”<sup>3</sup> Even with the electoral reform of 1963, which removed the property qualification and gave everyone the right to vote for two candidates in their riding, this dual system was continued. The main reason for this seems to have been to ensure that the existing denominational balance would be maintained. Former Liberal Premier Alex

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<sup>2</sup> Marlene Russel Clark, “Island Politics,” in Canada’s Smallest Province, ed Francis W.P. Bolger (Charlottetown: The Prince Edward Island Centennial Commission, 1973), 300. See also pp 299-301, 310-12, and her “The Franchise in Prince Edward Island and Its Relation to Island Politics and Other Political Institutions” (M.A.R. Thesis, Dalhousie University, 1968).

<sup>3</sup> Clark, “Franchise,” 300.

Matheson said he and Conservative cabinet minister J. D. Stewart, both Protestants, agreed to keep the dual ridings in a backroom manoeuvre for the purpose of maintaining the religious ratio. He was very surprised at the lack of Catholic outcry over this, especially as Catholics were now 50% of the population, commenting: "If I had been a Catholic in the House the day that Act was passed, I'd have been pulling the curtains down with anger."<sup>4</sup> The reason for their silence can probably be found in the Catholic fear that if things were changed they might be in an even worse position politically. John Eldon Green said the Diocesan committee he was a part of approached the Catholic chair of the Electoral Reform Committee in 1963 to get rid of both the property vote and the assemblyman / councillor arrangement, which would in turn sound the death knell for the gentlemen's agreement that had grown up around them. The chair replied "but we could be wiped out." When Green pointed out that the Bishop was "on side" with the committee the chair responded: "Ah, but he's not from here. He doesn't understand our history."<sup>5</sup> This system was not broken until 1996 when the Island went to single ridings.

Elite accommodation has also been much at play in the choosing of the Lieutenant Governor, where in general the 'turn' has been the norm right down to the present day, though it has not always been possible to follow this alternating practice rigidly. Following the governorship of Protestant Murdock MacKinnon (1919-24) an editorial appeared in the Guardian of July 23, 1924, speculating on who the next Lieutenant Governor would be. It unabashedly made positive reference to the Island's unwritten conventions in the choosing of its governors and mayors:

By a wise provision of our forefathers it has been decreed by an unwritten law, that in this mixed community of ours the seats of honor, both at the head of the provincial and the municipal governments, shall be occupied alternately by representatives of the Protestant and Catholic populations. . . . At the coming change the honor belongs to a Catholic . . . and a Catholic is ready to assume

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid 105.

<sup>5</sup> Green 155.

the responsibility . . .

Ironically this turned out to be a time when it was deemed necessary to break the unwritten code, for the next Lieutenant Governor was a Protestant, Richard Hartz. In fact 16 of the 26 Lieutenant Governors appointed since Confederation have been Protestant, and for the first eight decades of the twentieth century it was always two Protestants followed by one Catholic. Of the seven times the custom of alternation was not adhered to only once were there two Catholics in a row (1894-1904), because the Catholics “complain of not getting their share.”<sup>6</sup>

Elite accommodation also was part of federal politics on the Island. Both candidates in King’s County were consistently Catholics while the candidates in the other three ridings were Protestants, thus ensuring a consistent 3-1 ratio in favour of the Protestants.<sup>7</sup> At the Senator level appointments have favoured Protestants as well but at slightly less than a 2-1 level. Prince Edward Island has sent 36 Senators to the Upper House in Ottawa, 23 Protestant and 13 Catholic.

Gentlemen’s agreements also defined what happened at the party and patronage level. Political historian Frank MacKinnon asserted: “In party organizations the result is obvious in the selection of officers, the awarding of patronage, and the appointment of judges and senators. The ‘turn’ was evident in almost all appointments -- now a Catholic, now a Protestant.”<sup>8</sup> A few examples of this follow. The superintendent position at Canadian National Rail alternated between Catholic and Protestant appointments;<sup>9</sup> the

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<sup>6</sup> [Premier] Donald Farquharson to Sir Louis Davies, December 22, 1898 (confidential), Farquharson Papers, PARO RG 25.19, transcription by Edward MacDonald. See also in the same file Farquharson to Bishop James C. McDonald, December 29, 1898, and Farquharson to Hon. Daniel Davies, February 21, 1899. For a secondary account see W. MacKinnon, Party, 77.

<sup>7</sup> Green 172.

<sup>8</sup> Frank MacKinnon, “Big Engine, Little Body,” in Canadian Provincial Politics, ed Martin Robin (Scarborough, ON: Prentice-Hall, 1978), 229.

<sup>9</sup> Frank M. Stewart of Charlottetown, conversation with author, Oct 12, 2007. He worked there from 1972 until it was shut down.

Presidency of the P.E.I. Teacher's Federation was also rotated because, according to one teacher, "that's the way it has always been";<sup>10</sup> and appointments in the educational field very much took religion into account. In the 1st district of Prince the vacant post of school inspector was in dispute in 1916 and the person who had applied for the position wrote:

I had a communication from Mr. [Charles] Dalton some time ago in reference to the inspectorship. I infer that the appointment was not made owing to some opposition to the appointment of a Catholic from fear or causing a disproportion in the matter of religion. . . . At present there are four Protestant inspectors and four Catholic, and . . . if you take into consideration the total number of officials appointed by the Board of Education you will see that Protestants predominate. On the staff of Prince of Wales College there are six Protestant professors and only three Catholics.<sup>11</sup>

Seventeen years earlier the government was trying to get rid of Catholic Professor John Caven of PWC, as he was too old and infirm to fill the position properly. Premier Farquharson wrote at the time: "I regret . . . to say that it will be utterly impossible for us to put in a protestant instead of Professor Caven. It is somewhat difficult even to put him out, but to substitute a protestant would be more than I dare talk about at present."<sup>12</sup> Even the education of dental hygienists was subject to the turn. In the mid-1950s females attending PWC and Notre Dame would be invited to apply for a two-year diploma course taught in Boston, fully funded by the government. One year two Protestant girls and one Catholic would be selected, then two years later two Catholics and one Protestant would be picked.<sup>13</sup>

The turn was not always appreciated by those in the Protestant ascendancy, as is evidenced in the following remark by a Protestant woman in describing how Roman Catholics were getting positions in the schools and hospitals: "They're getting in. I don't

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<sup>10</sup> Lester Selleck, My Island Home (Windsor, Nova Scotia: Lancelot Press, 1973), 40. For another example see p 274.

<sup>11</sup> Leo Nelligan to John A. Mathieson, May 31, 1916, Mathieson Papers, PARO RG 25.23.

<sup>12</sup> Farquharson to Dr. Harper, Inspector of Schools, Quebec, June 10, 1899, Farquharson Papers, PARO RG 25.19.

<sup>13</sup> Joan Thompson of Charlottetown, letter to author, Mar 13, 2009, contained in "BColl."

know how so many of them are getting in!”<sup>14</sup> A man from Murray Harbour was also upset at the ‘favouritism’ shown Catholics in the hiring of messengers and door-keepers in the House: “As I wrote to you four years ago for the position I was not to[o] well pleased to see that position fil[led] when the House met by [an] Iresman [Irishman] and Frenchman. I think it is time that more Protestants get some of [the] patronage.”<sup>15</sup>

Yet for Catholics their feeling was that their turn did not come up quite often enough, as is seen in Farquharson’s quote above, and the hard facts frequently support this claim. The *Watchman* of February 5, 1891, reported that Charlottetown Protestants held public offices worth \$8404 per year while Catholics only received \$2,219 per year.<sup>16</sup> A Catholic pamphlet of 1900 claimed similar discrimination, noting only 3 of 17 bureaucrats at the federal level and 26 of 156 in the judicial system at the provincial level were Catholic. In both instances the Catholic proportion amounted to about 20%, where one would have expected the percentage naturally to fall closer to 45%, which was their proportion of the Island’s population. This imbalance was also evident in municipal appointments in Charlottetown, according to Bob Crockett: “My grandfather and my father told stories about the fact that the Police Chief (and I believe the fire chief) were ‘always’ Protestant. This was broken when Charlie Ready (Catholic) was appointed Police Chief,”<sup>17</sup> in 1979.

Sectarian concerns also reached down to politics at the municipal level.

Charlottetown native Lester Selleck said “public offices, such as the mayoralty, had to be alternated to keep peace,”<sup>18</sup> while Bob Crockett reported:

My grandfather and father told me that the office of Mayor "rotated" between

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<sup>14</sup> “WColl” 80sR.

<sup>15</sup> J. M. Dalziel of Murray Harbour North to Mathieson, February 15, 1916, Mathieson Papers, PARO RG 25.23.

<sup>16</sup> As cited in “WColl” Cd7.

<sup>17</sup> Bob Crockett of Charlottetown, email to author, Aug 29, 2005.

<sup>18</sup> Selleck 40.



Protestant and Catholic over the years (when a Catholic mayor, for example, decided to step down, the office then opened up to a Protestant and the election contest would only be between competing Protestants . . .)!<sup>19</sup>

The 1924 Guardian editorial, quoted above,<sup>20</sup> confirms that this perception was certainly the reality in the 1920s. Yet if practice is any indication of theory then for extensive periods in Charlottetown's history the rotation of mayors was not part of the unwritten code. Only 13 of the 45 mayors were Catholic but this includes all six mayors since 1975. The first twelve mayors (1855-1904) were Protestant, the thirteenth Catholic. The next five were again Protestant (1906-16). Then from 1916 to 1978 there was a rotation of sorts. This worked out precisely with the six mayors from 1916-28, as well as the six from 1956-78, but from 1928-56 there was only one Catholic scattered among the ten mayors. It therefore seems that there was an unwritten agreement but it was not put into place until the time of the First World War, perhaps in response to the growing amity among the soldiers in the trenches. For some reason this was not adhered to from 1928-56, and by the late-seventies it was annulled, but the Guardian article seems conclusive that the city's 'wise forefathers' had settled on a Mayoral rotation and thus the perception of the people was a true reflection of the reality, at least for significant periods during the twentieth century.

As for city councillors in Charlottetown there were eight councillors in five wards. Given the religious geography of the city usually only two Catholics would get elected, in Wards 1 and 2, but the Catholics could occasionally win a third position with a "plumper" for their man in Ward 5.<sup>21</sup> A plumper is when a group votes for only one candidate when they have the right to vote for more, which thus gives their candidate a greater chance to be elected. In 1962 when Ward 6 was created with two seats, one went Catholic and one Protestant.

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<sup>19</sup> Crockett email.

<sup>20</sup> P 225.

<sup>21</sup> John Eldon Green, interview by author, Feb 8, 2008.

Rural communities also experienced the Protestant ascendancy in their municipal politics. In Montague: “Catholics were the minority . . . and we often felt as second class. No catholic who ran for town council ever came close, up until the last few years actually.”<sup>22</sup> In Georgetown the tilt of the balance of power in the Protestants’ favour was manifested in a different way. A completely equal division of council positions was maintained, as well as the turn for the mayor, but where Montague was roughly three quarters Protestant, Georgetown was roughly three quarters Catholic.<sup>23</sup> So where Catholics constituted a significant minority they shared very little political power but where they constituted a significant majority they were guaranteed only 50% of it.

While Islanders successfully avoided the sectarian strife that had caused such devastation in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, it did come at a price. The ‘turn’ and other accommodative practices succeeded in their goal of keeping the peace but they also achieved other less noble ends. While they assured Catholics of a significant portion of political patronage appointments and of maintaining a voice in the decision making process, it also kept them in their ‘safe bubble’ and assured the Protestants that whatever happened they would maintain the ascendancy. This was clearly apparent in both federal and provincial election practices but also evident where the ‘turn about’ was in effect, for in the latter whenever there were exceptions to the system they almost always favoured the Protestants. While there was a tendency for some Protestants to feel that Island Catholics wanted to be ‘the tail that wagged the Island dog,’ most Island Catholics would argue this only proved “it was a Protestant dog.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Paul Graham of Montague, email to author, Aug 31, 2005.

<sup>23</sup> See p 274.

<sup>24</sup> E. MacDonald, Stronghearted, 20.

## CHAPTER 14

### RELIGIOUS AND GROUP RELATIONS

#### Religious Relations

David Weale has commented that “religious bigotry was part of the baggage our European forebears brought with them to this place. . . . Friendship and good will often prevailed over ancient prejudices, but it was always a factor to be reckoned with, and it was difficult for a Protestant to view a Roman Catholic, or vice versa, without looking through the spectacles of inherited bias.”<sup>1</sup> A well known hockey personality on the Island, Pius Callaghan, shared a bittersweet story that illustrates this reality. The Rev George Taylor, a Protestant minister in Charlottetown, and a local priest were in the First World War together and became great friends. They were often seen walking together but many people had great trouble accepting their friendship. At the priest’s funeral the minister followed behind the pallbearers and was crying. Pius, who was about ten at the time, wondered why he was crying; he thought he should be happy because the priest had died. As he recounted this to his interviewer 65 years later he said: “Wasn’t that a terrible thing to think?”, but then noted he was brought up that way.<sup>2</sup>

It is not surprising to find that in each group there were many who considered the others to be heretics or at least greatly erring in their faith. As one wag put it, “The Protestants believed the Catholics were going to hell, and the Catholics were just as sure the

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<sup>1</sup> Weale, Long Way, 35.

<sup>2</sup> “WColl” 89A7.

Protestants were doomed, so there was pleasure in it for everyone.”<sup>3</sup> One email I received said: “I admit we were taught that our religion was the only real one. . . . I think many Protestants thought that we perceived them as a lesser people because of our strong conviction that ours was ‘better’”<sup>4</sup> One woman raised in Catholic North Rustico in the late-1950s reported that:

The first time I met a Protestant was when one of my father's friends came to visit . . . They had a daughter named Louise and we became friends. We were about six or seven at the time [and] she was one of the nicest and kindest people I knew. . . . Later on that year in a classroom taught by a nun . . . we were instructed that only Roman Catholics went to heaven. I stood up and told her about my friend and that I didn't believe she was going to hell because she was Protestant. I was called a heretic, screamed at and brought before the nun's desk, was told to say the act of contrition (a catholic prayer that we were taught to say by rote) and got the ruler over my knuckles. I didn't give in to the fact that she wasn't going to heaven because I told the teacher she was better than I was - that was what it was like for us in that setting. That was my first experience with the Protestant/Catholic divide.<sup>5</sup>

Paddy, an Irishman from Fort Augustus, exhibited a little more broad-minded view when he remarked to his Catholic friends that “Protestants aren’t so bad. The poor people are just trying to get where we’re going.”<sup>6</sup>

The same belief was evident on the Protestant side, as the following two quotes demonstrate: “According to the Belfast and Belleview theology, [Catholic] Iona was going to be dancing and playing cards in hell for that’s where they were headed”;<sup>7</sup> “I, as a Protestant, even as a child, wondered how they could even aspire to Heaven.”<sup>8</sup> In general, especially after the rise of liberalism in the mainline Protestant churches in the first half of the twentieth century, evangelicals were more likely to believe that Catholics were destined

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<sup>3</sup> Weale, Whatever, 43.

<sup>4</sup> Graham email. See also “WColl” 04B; 04H; 95A; 88E5; 88F; 86C; 80sL3.

<sup>5</sup> Myrna Gauthier of Charlottetown, email to author, Sept 5, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> “WColl” 80sV1. Cf Weale, Long Way, 45.

<sup>7</sup> “WColl” 82N2. See also 80sD.

<sup>8</sup> Donald (Dan) MacInnis of Glen William, email to author, August 29, 2005.

for hell than the mainline denominations, though I found no evidence that this belief correlated in any way to the friendliness of relations that were exhibited to Catholics by one group or the other.

Probably just as common an attitude, however, was that while the other side was certainly erring in their faith all were headed in the same general direction. Sir Andrew Macphail expressed this viewpoint well in his memoirs about growing up in Orwell: "Catholic families were not resented as such. On the contrary, they were treated with indulgence. Their religion was not their fault. It came as a wholesome surprise that they regarded their religion as the greatest blessing in their lives. . . . Catholics we considered as children striving towards the light."<sup>9</sup>

With this underpinning theology it is no surprise to find that attending the church of the other group was anathema. An informant from St Peter's recounted: "Children were taught from a very early age to keep to their own kind. I know Catholics were not allowed to take part in a Protestant service. You could go but no way pray with them. Also Protestants are the same when they come to a Catholic church."<sup>10</sup> The teaching on this matter was particularly strong among Catholics, who were grounded firmly in Tridentine values: "Catholics were taught never to look at Protestant churches and never to enter one."<sup>11</sup> The stricture seemed even stronger in Acadian communities, where even attendance at Protestant weddings was forbidden.<sup>12</sup> For some Catholics it was a mortal sin to walk into a Protestant Church,<sup>13</sup> and Protestants were also taught not to go to a Catholic church,<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Macphail, Master's, 100-1.

<sup>10</sup> "WColl" 80sL3.

<sup>11</sup> "WColl" 88C. See also 94D,N, 82B1.

<sup>12</sup> "WColl" 82P1.

<sup>13</sup> "WColl" 94S.

<sup>14</sup> See "WColl" 80sL3; 88E4.

though this did not stop the young people from attempting to sample the forbidden fruit.

David Weale recounted the time when he was about twelve and he and a friend sneaked into the magnificent St Dunstan's Basilica and climbed the stairs to the top of the steeple. On their way out they were confronted by a priest who asked David his name. David knew his name would immediately betray his Protestant roots, "So I screwed up my courage, looked him right in the eye, and informed him I was . . . David Gallant, [being] quite certain every single Gallant on the Island was Catholic . . . ." <sup>15</sup> In spite of all this in some areas attending the other's church was not uncommon. Some Protestants in Montague attended midnight Mass, <sup>16</sup> and in Georgetown they were doing this as early as the 1930s. Attendance at each other's church suppers and fund raisers seems to have always been the practice in Georgetown, and after the Second World War the Protestant and Catholic women there jointly sponsored the World Day of Prayer meetings. <sup>17</sup> In a number of other communities attendance at the other group's funerals, weddings and church suppers was also common. <sup>18</sup>

Conversions were not common on the Island but did happen. In the 1841 census the listing for the Andrew O'Connor family of Gaspereau totalled seven Catholics and one Methodist but by 1861 the whole family was Methodist. The McHerrons of nearby Murray Harbour North went from being three Roman Catholics and one Anglican in 1841 to being all Presbyterians. <sup>19</sup> A touching story is told of a Protestant husband who turned <sup>20</sup> on his

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<sup>15</sup> Weale, *Long Way*, 37-9. For other stories like this see Agnes Boudreault Walsh of Georgetown, interview by Donna M. Walsh Gallant, Mar 15, 2009, and Diane O'Hanley of Charlottetown, email to author, April 7, 2006, contained in "BColl;" and "WColl" 80sB, 87C, 93S, 94L.

<sup>16</sup> Larry Lanigan of Montague, email to author, Aug 30, 2005. He grew up in Montague in the 1950s.

<sup>17</sup> Rev Nathan Mair of Georgetown, letter to the author, Sept 12, 2005.

<sup>18</sup> See p 272f for the practice in St Peter's, and pp 236ff for practices related to funerals.

<sup>19</sup> Peter McGuigan, "Lot 61," p 36. See also his article on "Lot 22," p 69, for other conversion examples.

<sup>20</sup> That is, converted.

death bed because he saw his mother in a dream say: "I want you to go with your wife and children. Turn and go with them."<sup>21</sup> A much sadder story is told of a family in Malpeque. A Catholic man married a Protestant girl but she would not turn. So he made her sign a contract that all the boys would be raised Catholic and the girls Protestant. Their children were all boys with the exception of a girl who died in infancy and the husband said this was proof she was being judged by the devil and that she should have turned. This caused her lasting emotional damage. In the end all the boys except one became Protestants, greatly embittering the father.<sup>22</sup>

As is clear from the above examples, the expression used to describe a person changing their faith was that they had 'turned,' and this was most often the result of a mixed marriage. A Protestant married a Catholic woman and she turned. Their child, however, married a Catholic and likewise turned. The father waxed philosophical: "I stole one from the devil, I guess I should have expected him to steal one back."<sup>23</sup> In some situations when people turned their families disowned them.<sup>24</sup> Mary MacPhee said the usual cause of a Catholic girl not getting married in the Church was because she had become pregnant out of wedlock with a Protestant boy. She knew of three Catholic women in her community in this position and all were miserably unhappy for being forced to leave their church and raise their children Protestant. One of these received the sacraments on her death bed, but the enlightened priest, who was also her nephew, assured her it would be in order to have the funeral in the Baptist Church and be buried with her husband.<sup>25</sup>

The two faith groups did co-operate at times, especially in the building of churches,

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<sup>21</sup> "WColl" 99A. For other conversions to Catholicism see WColl 87D; PsC4-5.

<sup>22</sup> "WColl" 94Y.

<sup>23</sup> "WColl" 04F.

<sup>24</sup> "WColl" 83A3.

<sup>25</sup> "WColl" 94R.

as is seen in the following three examples from the turn of the century. In 1881 Lot 11 was roughly half Catholic and the rest mostly Anglican and Presbyterian. The Catholics and Anglicans “assisted one another in land clearing, home building, and church building. . . . Never, we are told, was there any sectarian animosity among them.”<sup>26</sup> Protestants also helped their Catholics neighbours in building the beautiful Indian River Church, designed by famed architect William Critchlow Harris, from 1896-1902.<sup>27</sup> Finally, St Dunstan’s Cathedral burned down on March 7, 1913, and “people of all religious denominations in the city rallied that night to offer whatever assistance they could give. One Protestant gentleman, in the lurid light of the fire, wrote a cheque for five thousand dollars to be used as the beginning of a fund for a new Cathedral Church.”<sup>28</sup> This was followed up by donations from other Protestants of materials and labour.<sup>29</sup>

### Funerals and Burial Customs

Not surprisingly, when a death occurred one generally went to the funeral home of one’s faith, to the undertaker of one’s faith, and most often bought caskets from someone of the same faith.<sup>30</sup> Gentlemen’s agreements were in place in many communities in regard to funeral practices. Panmure Island, for example, “always had three Roman Catholic and three Protestant pallbearers for most members of the community. It was a special mark of friendship in time of sorrow.”<sup>31</sup> One old man from Stanhope, however, had a less flattering interpretation of this accommodative practice when he said, “This was to show they could

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<sup>26</sup> O’Grady 39.

<sup>27</sup> Guardian, May 15, 1987.

<sup>28</sup> Sister Carmel MacDonald, Remembering: Diocese of Charlottetown, 1829-1979 (Charlottetown: Diocesan Pastoral Centre, 1979), 75.

<sup>29</sup> See also p 87 for examples from the pioneer period.

<sup>30</sup> “WColl” 80sH1, 93V.

<sup>31</sup> Paul MacDonald, formerly of Panmure Island, email to Callum Beck, Aug 29, 2005.



all live together without killing each other.”<sup>32</sup> Many other communities such as East Point, Thistle and Shamrock Corner, and Georgetown followed this pattern, and in South Lake the Protestants and Catholics even dug the graves together.<sup>33</sup>

Clearly people in these and other communities<sup>34</sup> attended the funerals of the opposite denomination but in some other communities this was not the case.<sup>35</sup> Morell at one time had this stricture but a priest broke down the wall by his bold action. A Protestant businessman, Ralph Dingwell, died in 1944. The Catholics, as was their custom, went to the wake but not the funeral because they would never enter a Protestant church. Father McKenna, however, was a friend of the Dingwells and attended the funeral. The Catholics initially questioned this but then assumed if their priest could go to a Protestant funeral they were free to do so as well. Since that time most Catholics in this area have freely attended funerals in Protestant churches.<sup>36</sup>

Customs surrounding burying differed according to the community. Generally cemeteries were divided by sect. In Central Queen's, as an example, Cavendish, New Glasgow and Wheatley River were Protestant, while Hope River (St Ann's) and North Rustico were Catholic, and Hunter River and South Rustico had both. The People's Cemetery in Charlottetown has both a Catholic and Protestant section. In 1942 six airmen died in a crash outside of Charlottetown. The five Protestants were buried in the Sherwood cemetery (Protestant) and the Catholic in the Parkdale cemetery (Catholic). This was likely

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<sup>32</sup> Harry Kielly of Stanhope, interview by Cindy Morin, in Cindy Morin, "Protestant and Catholic Relations in the Community of Stanhope," Mar 31, 2008, in "BColl."

<sup>33</sup> "WColl" 00I2; 78C; PsD; PsH. See also 82G5.

<sup>34</sup> Such as St Peter's (Thomas Ledwell of St Peters, emails to author, Sept 15, 17, 21, 2005), Fanningbrook ("WColl" 04D), and Murray River (82G5-6). See also 82B1, 80sV2.

<sup>35</sup> "WColl" 86B3.

<sup>36</sup> "WColl" PsJ1.

the air force authorities bowing to local customs.<sup>37</sup> There were rare exceptions to this rule. The cemetery in Bonshaw, for example, was mixed, as was its school.<sup>38</sup> Mixed marriages were often fraught with the problem of which cemetery a person should be buried in, and sometimes led to so much conflict that relatives of the deceased dug up their kin and re-buried them in the “proper” cemetery.<sup>39</sup>

### Fraternal, Volunteer and Religious Organizations

Among fraternal groups the Masons were all Protestant and Rotary dominantly so. This sectarian pre-dominance, however, probably had less to do with their prejudice against Catholics, than it did to do with the fact that both groups (along with the Lion’s Club and the YMCA) were condemned by the Vatican in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>40</sup> The Benevolent Irish Society was founded as a mixed denominational group in 1825 but by mid-century had become solely a Catholic group. Groups like Kinsman, Kiwanis and Gyro, however, seem to have been quite mixed, and the Royal Canadian Legion was decidedly so. Some groups experienced the divide simply as a result of being connected to a larger organisation that was divided. This was true for Cadets in Charlottetown because it was school-based.

It was also true for the Women’s Institute (WI), though it was constitutionally non-denominational, due to a major part of their work being to aid the local school. The organization was launched on P.E.I. in 1913. By 1939 there were 247 branches and 83% were in predominantly Protestant parts of the Island. The Catholics, who then accounted

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<sup>37</sup> Clay 5.

<sup>38</sup> William M. Glen of Bonshaw, conversation with author, Mar 27, 2009.

<sup>39</sup> For examples see “WColl” 94U; 80sG, 80sL2; Weale, Whatever, 47; and the story of the Gull Decoy told in Edward D. Ives, Larry Gorman. The Man who Made the Songs (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964), pp 30-5, 49, 148, 182.

<sup>40</sup> Basil Lewis, “Rotary, Freemasonry and the Roman Catholic Church,” Rotary Global History Website, [www.rotaryfirst100.org/history/history/other\\_organizations/freemasonry](http://www.rotaryfirst100.org/history/history/other_organizations/freemasonry).

for 45% of Islanders, were clearly under-represented in the Institutes. Moreover, major Catholic communities, such as Tignish, Miscouche, Kinkora, Borden (52% Catholic in 1951), Fort Augustus, Tracadie and Souris did not have a WI, and the Acadian Evangeline district only had one, while the only significant Protestant communities not represented were Kensington and Murray River.<sup>41</sup> This under-representation can partly be explained by the presence of the Catholic Women's League (CWL), which served a similar purpose, in some Catholic areas. Some small communities, such as Mayfield, had separate Catholic and Protestant WI branches while others were mixed,<sup>42</sup> the determining factor generally being whether the community had separate schools or not. Overall the WI, however, played a bridging role. In 1928 they and the CWL worked together to push government to establish the Provincial Sanatorium for tuberculosis,<sup>43</sup> and they also played key roles in the inter-denominational Adult Education League and Rural Development Council.

The devout were generally able to lay aside their doctrinal differences when confronting a larger problem. The Mechanics' Institute, the Tenant League, the Co-operative Movement<sup>44</sup> and the Rural Development Council<sup>45</sup> were all non-sectarian in both theory and practice. Other organizations, focussed on relief and social justice issues, had a separate association for each sect but sometimes worked co-operatively together. This included the efforts made on behalf of victims of the potato famines in Ireland and Scotland

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<sup>41</sup> I came up with these figures and facts by comparing the exhaustive branch histories found in Through the Years. The Women's Institutes of Prince Edward Island 1913-63 (Summerside: Williams and Crue, 1963) against my oral history map.

<sup>42</sup> For example, see Stanley Bridge (p 208), Stanhope (p 271), St Peter's (p 273).

<sup>43</sup> Laura Pottie, Their Dreams Never Ending. A History of Women's Institutes on P.E.I. (Charlottetown: Federated Women's institute of Prince Edward Island, 2000), 27-8.

<sup>44</sup> The most important primary source on this is J.T. Croteau, Cradled in the Waves (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1951). Valuable secondary sources include E. MacDonald, SDU, 341-57 and the detailed study by Weir.

<sup>45</sup> For more on the latter three groups see pp 89, 280 and 282.

in the late-1840s and the Temperance organizations.<sup>46</sup> One anecdote is told about the latter group. P.E.I. was the first province to 'go dry' in 1901 but by 1917 there were concerns about the enforcement of Prohibition. To address this matter an administrative commission of six clergymen was set up, half were Catholic and half Protestant.<sup>47</sup>

The two most religious fraternal organizations on the Island, the Knights of Columbus (founded in 1903) and the Orange Lodge, were by their constitutions sectarian. Both were viewed by the other side with dark suspicion, though in truth there were very few local events that could have justified this conclusion. Lawyer Ron Profitt related that a friend of his in a sixties' folk group was forced to leave it by her father when they got a gig at the Knights of Columbus because, he believed they were "secretly collecting weapons for an uprising."<sup>48</sup> Other denominational groups, such as the Catholic Mutual Benefit Association, the Catholic Women's League and the United Church Women, do not seem to have engendered any negative sectarian feelings.

### Recreation and Sports

For the most part club sports on the Island were not divided denominationally, nor were the minor baseball or hockey programs.<sup>49</sup> Keith MacLean interviewed about ten Island sports personalities, including such well known figures as former NHL player Forbie Kennedy and sports columnist 'Fiddler' MacDonald, and concluded that "sports served a positive role in religious history on P.E.I."<sup>50</sup> Even though the divide was not as prominent in the sporting arena as it was in many other areas it still made its mark there because of the

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<sup>46</sup> See p 88.

<sup>47</sup> Clark, "Island Politics," 322.

<sup>48</sup> Ron Profitt of Charlottetown, interview by author, Aug 30, 2007.

<sup>49</sup> Ron Atkinson of Charlottetown, interview by author, Feb 24, 2008.

<sup>50</sup> Keith MacLean, "Sports: Bridge or Division in Catholic-Protestant Relations on P.E.I.," term paper, March 2008, p 12, contained in "BColl." For another example see Bruce, PWC, 159-61.

wider geographic and educational divide. Senior hockey teams in rural communities would often be composed of people of one sect or the other just due to the fact that the communities were predominantly one sect, though that did not mean a Protestant community had any real difficulty with adding a fast-skating Catholic to their team.<sup>51</sup> In Charlottetown people speak of the hockey games between the Catholic Queen's Square School and SDU and the "Protestant" West Kent and Prince of Wales as "a vicious rivalry"<sup>52</sup> or "war,"<sup>53</sup> "almost having a sense of religious war about them."<sup>54</sup> Still these are exceptions to the general rule.

In two sporting institutions the Protestant ascendancy was evident, the Yacht Club and the Belvedere Golf Club, no doubt due primarily to the fact that Protestants were the only ones who generally could afford these luxurious pastimes. In 1902 the private Charlottetown Golf Club, now known as Belvedere, was founded by "the cream of Charlottetown society," effectively all of whom were Protestants, and had a reputation in its first few decades of protecting its WASP membership.<sup>55</sup> Probably the first Catholic member was Art Gaudet, owner of the Evening Patriot, who joined around 1935. Many Catholics were under the impression that "they used the blackball to keep the Catholics out."<sup>56</sup> Club historians Beer and Atkinson said that the club did employ the blackball system for choosing members until the late-1950s, but as far as they knew being Catholic was never a reason for which one would be blackballed, and certainly not from the 1930s onwards.<sup>57</sup> Still it is

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<sup>51</sup> Roy Dickieson of New Glasgow, P.E.I., interview by author, March 18, 2005.

<sup>52</sup> Cheverie interview by Ryan Gallant.

<sup>53</sup> Frank Ledwell of St Peters, interview by Keith MacLean, Mar 2008, in MacLean 5.

<sup>54</sup> Angus Beck of Charlottetown, conversation with author, 2005.

<sup>55</sup> Ron H., Atkinson, W.A. Bill Beer and Harry K. Simmonds, A Treasure Called Belvedere (Charlottetown: Belvedere Golf Club, 2000), 7-11, 58.

<sup>56</sup> John Eldon Green of Charlottetown, interview by author, Feb 24, 2008. Ian MacMillan, in our interview, had the same impression.

<sup>57</sup> Atkinson interviews, and Bill Beer of Charlottetown, interview by author, Feb 24, 2008.

important to recognize the significance of the “perceived reality” that many Catholics shared, and the probable cause of this in their historic exclusion from the power and moneyed positions on the Island.

Outside of the educational and medical institutions perhaps the area where the divide was most keenly felt, especially among young people, was in the recreation centres in Charlottetown and Summerside. In Charlottetown Catholics went to the Basilica Recreation Centre (opened 1963) or before that the Holy Name Hall, while Protestants frequented the YMCA. Some priests went as far as to say that if you went to the YMCA you would be excommunicated, which was in accord with a 1920 Vatican decree that described the YMCA as “white masonry” and said Catholic youth should not participate in it because it “corrupted their faith.”<sup>58</sup> Father Cheverie reported that “the priests would come right out and say, ‘don’t go to the Y’.”<sup>59</sup> Even so there was always the rare rebel who would go over to the other side.<sup>60</sup> Having become a regular myself at the ‘Y’ in 1963 I witnessed the arrival of large numbers of Catholics at the facility in the fall of 1967, when the S.W.A.P. basketball program became suddenly inundated with Catholic young people. Local basketball legend, Mike Connolly, recalled that at one time “we Catholics were not allowed to go there and then all of a sudden it was okay.”<sup>61</sup> This was the year when the Junior High Schools were integrated, and what made it acceptable, of course, was that “the anchor barrier to community” had been removed. Their dances as well became integrated at this time. Some Catholics also went to the YMCA in Summerside “but the overwhelming majority were Protestants and everyone knew it was a Protestant place.”<sup>62</sup> It was still not

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<sup>58</sup> B. Lewis, original source not given.

<sup>59</sup> Father Charles Cheverie of Charlottetown, interview by Keith MacLean, Mar 2008, in MacLean 11.

<sup>60</sup> Frank Stewart conversation. Several others shared with me exceptions to the rule.

<sup>61</sup> Mike Connolly of Charlottetown, conversation with author, 2005.

<sup>62</sup> Weale interview.

fully integrated as late as 1970.<sup>63</sup>

### The Divide in Business and Employment

The divide was far from ubiquitous when it came to commercial and professional interests but was still evident. Many villages had two general stores where only one was needed. Gordon Cobb reported that he had twelve elderly Islanders from five different rural areas tell him that “general stores were patronized on a religious basis,”<sup>64</sup> though some old timers deny this reality, claiming people just “wanted to do business where they could get the best deal.”<sup>65</sup> In Charlottetown businesses often were divided unofficially on a sectarian basis. While shopping and staffing in the big department stores were mixed, the same does not seem to have been true for the smaller businesses, including drugstores, barber shops, and even dairies and restaurants to some degree. One old-timer from the city said: “In Charlottetown there was religious pressure on where one shopped, banked, etc. This disappeared with the advent of the shopping malls.”<sup>66</sup> Sectarian concerns also extended to hiring labourers, one Catholic noting that “if you were building a house you would get a Catholic plumber.”<sup>67</sup> Others, however, told me you would just hire the best and/or cheapest person. In Summerside, “Protestants were certainly dominant in terms of commerce, position and privilege, and wealth . . .,”<sup>68</sup> but there does not seem to have been much of a business divide, except perhaps somewhat in the smaller businesses and restaurants. In

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<sup>63</sup> R. Proffitt interview.

<sup>64</sup> Cobb 13-14, n 11.

<sup>65</sup> Dickieson interview. Cf “WColl” 82M2.

<sup>66</sup> Reg MacLean of Charlottetown, email to the author, Sept 2005. The malls arrived in the early-1970s.

<sup>67</sup> Redmond interview.

<sup>68</sup> Weale interview. Ted Redmond, in our interview, told me he estimated that in Charlottetown roughly 75% of the money was in Protestant hands. This same figure is given in the Vindicator, Feb 20, 1863.

professional circles, however, elite accommodation was practised. Lawyer Ron Profitt, who was raised in Summerside, told me that the dental and legal firms in that community followed the 50/50 rule and that as late as 1985 Ron did not get a position because it would have resulted in there being too many Catholics in the firm.<sup>69</sup>

In general throughout the province Protestants had better jobs and were more educated, while Catholics (Acadians especially) had more menial jobs, such as delivering coal, maid work, etc. An expression like ‘I have a French in the kitchen’ was not uncommon, and French or Catholic boys were often hired to work on Protestant farms.<sup>70</sup> One correspondent specifically stated that “Catholics were persons who worked for you.”<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, some parts of the Maritimes exhibited far greater sectarianism in this area than P.E.I. did. New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, had a very strong Catholic-Protestant divide alongside its colour divide. Up until the 1980s two of the major employers in the area hired on the basis of sect. One person informed me that he and his friend applied for their first job at a manufacturing plant there in 1974, hoping to spend the summer working together, but one was assigned to the Protestant plant and the other to the Catholic one.<sup>72</sup>

Protestants often felt, whether this was true or not, that priests were working behind the scenes to help Catholics get government money and jobs. On the other side Father Jim Kelly remembered ads for jobs saying ‘no Catholics need apply,’ both public and private ads,<sup>73</sup> and others have mentioned this to me. Apparently an advertisement ran in the Patriot

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<sup>69</sup> R. Profitt interview.

<sup>70</sup> See also “WColl” 86A2 and 80sS (“We even had a Catholic work for us. He ate supper with us and everything”).

<sup>71</sup> W.G. of Charlottetown, email to author, Apr 17, 2006 (correspondent asked to remain anonymous).

<sup>72</sup> John MacDonald of Halifax, Nova Scotia, conversation with author, Sept 10, 2008. The schools in this area were also segregated by sect and many but not all of the communities.

<sup>73</sup> Father Jim Kelly, interview by author, Sept 2004.



in the 1930s: "Wanted: Teacher for Stanhope School, Roman Catholics need not apply."<sup>74</sup> I have not been able to confirm any of this, however, and wonder if it is like similar traditions in Scotland and the U.S.A. that are generally believed but which hard research is unable to verify.<sup>75</sup>

J. T. Croteau gave an interesting overview of the divide in the world of finance on the Island. He felt professionals, farmers and labourers, etc, got along tolerably well but that among businessmen religious lines were drawn, particularly in the fields of commerce and finance:

In parts of Eastern Canada, at least before the war, it looked as if there was a policy to keep Catholics out of business. . . . This situation existed not only in the managerial and administrative levels, but extended throughout the humblest positions. In Charlottetown there were five branch banks. One, a branch of a small Quebec bank, had a Catholic manager; but even it had to hire one or two Protestant clerks so as not to offend public opinion. Out of the fifty or more clerks in the other four branches, not more than two or three were Catholics. The same situation existed among the Trust Companies. The head of a local business College told me that she found it useless to recommend a Catholic girl for a local business position no matter how good she was. St. Dunstan's graduates rarely entered upon a business career. That there was a considered policy to keep Catholics out of business would be vehemently denied by Canadian business leaders; still the facts are that Catholics succeed in politics and in the professions but rarely in the world of finance. The province of Quebec is an exception to this, but even here the aristocrats of the Montreal financial district are predominantly English-speaking Protestants."<sup>76</sup>

Lester Selleck further noted that "bank managers in some cases were rotated on a religious basis."<sup>77</sup>

In sum, up until the 1960s Protestants were, for the most part, more highly educated than Catholics, in the higher paying jobs, and dominated the financial and commercial fields, which fairly well paralleled the situation in Northern Ireland. It is also probably fair to

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<sup>74</sup> Kielly interview.

<sup>75</sup> See Steve Bruce, et al, *Sectarianism* viii, and Richard Jensen. "'No Irish Need Apply': A Myth of Victimization," *Journal of Social History* 36.2 (2002): 405-429.

<sup>76</sup> Croteau 134-5.

<sup>77</sup> Selleck 40.

affirm that Protestants tended to patronize Protestant tradesmen, professionals and small businesses, while Catholics mostly kept to Catholics, except where necessity (e.g., there was no one of the same faith to deal with), commercial advantage or more personal considerations dictated otherwise. Supporting those of 'your own kind' was an important value for many Islanders. Yet it was certainly not an all-encompassing attitude, there were many exceptions to this general pattern, and the divide in this area on the Island was not nearly as complete or consistent as it was in the fields of education, medicine or politics.

### Conclusion

Not surprisingly the divide on P.E.I. was strongly felt at the level of religious conviction and practice, and Islanders of both faith groups shared the same wary attitudes to their sister denomination that were common in the wider Christian world at the time. Still, the divide at this level was far from complete. Not only were there a good number of examples of co-operation between the two groups and in some communities even attendance at each other's religious services, but there were also few examples of sectarian wrangling after the end of the school debates in 1877. Religious division seems to have been not as keen on the Island after this time as elsewhere in the British Empire or the USA, and this is likely mainly due to both the necessity of maintaining decent relations in a small community and to the effectiveness of the gentlemen's agreements in keeping religion out of the public debate. In regard to sporting organizations and volunteer groups the divide on the Island, for the most part, was not prevalent. Still, in the recreation centres, school hockey in Charlottetown, and clubs like the Benevolent Irish Society, the Knights of Columbus and the Orange Lodge, the divide was sometimes experienced at nearly its most intense level.

## CHAPTER 15

### PERSONAL RELATIONS

Unlike today, most everyone who lived on the Island ‘before the mend’ was aware not only of the faith of each community but on a more local level “usually knew the religion of everyone in their community.” A whole nomenclature not surprisingly grew up around the two tribes, though perhaps none quite so colourful as the Proddy dog and caundle humpher (candle carrier) used in Scotland.<sup>1</sup> Catholics were referred to as “Dogans,” after the Irish surname, the term being “only mildly offensive in itself, if at all.”<sup>2</sup> They were also dubbed “Micks,” while Protestants were “Macs,” after the common but not precisely accurate perception that Gaelic surnames beginning with “Mc” were Irish Catholic while those beginning with “Mac” were Scottish Protestants. In one case I know of the perception created the reality when a family of Protestant McCabes changed their name to MacCabe.<sup>3</sup> The expression “Black Protestant” was common among Catholics,<sup>4</sup> one person even telling the story of hearing an elderly priest use it at their marriage classes in 1986.<sup>5</sup> “Black Catholic” was not unheard of<sup>6</sup> but used only rarely. The counterpart to “Black

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<sup>1</sup> Marion Bowman, interview by author, August 28, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> W.S. Avis, ed, A Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles: Dictionary of Canadian English (Toronto: W. J. Gage, 1967).

<sup>3</sup> Terry MacCabe of Moncton, N.B., conversation with author, 1996.

<sup>4</sup> “WColl” 95L; 82K1; 80sL3; 74A2.

<sup>5</sup> Eddie MacDonald of Brackley, interview by Lorraine Dougan, Mar 15, 2008. Contained in “BColl.” It was also commonly used in nineteenth-century Ireland, even by Archbishop Cullen (see Donald Harmon Akenson, Small Differences: Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants, 1815-1922. An International Perspective [Montreal: McGill University Press, 1988]), 143.

<sup>6</sup> “WColl” 86A4.

Protestant” was more often a phrase like “dirty Irish Catholics”<sup>7</sup> or “them damn Frenchmen.”<sup>8</sup> Less invidious phrases were also used such as “your own / another kind”<sup>9</sup> and “non-Catholic.”<sup>10</sup> Also commonly heard was the expression that one might be half Protestant or a quarter Catholic when they came from a mixed marriage, as if religious affiliation was a genetic matter. One wag when asked which half was Protestant said “the half that can’t have any fun.”<sup>11</sup>

On a personal level relations between Protestants and Catholics ran the gamut from genuine friendliness, to benign indifference, to wary suspiciousness, to occasional outright verbal and physical conflict, and finally to serious prejudice and near hatred. These will be reviewed in reverse order.

### Relations of Conflict

It is fair to say that there was little of the deep bitterness, prejudice and hatred between the Island faith groups that has marred relationships between similar groups elsewhere in the world, and certainly nothing like that witnessed in Belfast or Glasgow. Still it did exist. One Protestant from the Catholic Sturgeon area claimed: “We were taught to hate Catholics. Mom was black against the Catholics.”<sup>12</sup> Another person said that “the only way we could tolerate Catholics was to try and find one good thing about them, and just think about that.”<sup>13</sup> Similar attitudes were likewise prevalent in parts of the Catholic community. One lady noted that “she was taught to hate Protestants, but added she

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<sup>7</sup> “WColl” 80sK.

<sup>8</sup> Dickieson interview.

<sup>9</sup> “WColl” 95T; 83A3; 82G2; 80sF; 80sL3.

<sup>10</sup> “WColl” 04B; 95T; 93F.

<sup>11</sup> “WColl” 93Q. For other examples of this expression see 93D, 82K1, Green 24.

<sup>12</sup> “WColl” 04E.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Weale, Whatever, 47.

thankfully does not.”<sup>14</sup> One eight year old boy from Sturgeon, who was being teased about a Protestant girl, is reported to have proclaimed loudly that he would die rather than have any love “for that bugger of a black Protestant.”<sup>15</sup> One Catholic lady pointed out the supreme irony in all of this, noting that “we were taught to love thy neighbour as yourself but don’t love a Protestant, or a black man, or anything different outside your own.”<sup>16</sup>

Rowdiness and violence between the two groups, while far from common, was not unheard of. Among adults it was generally connected to drink or elections.<sup>17</sup> In Richmond, which was half and half, Gary Robichaud reported that “around the days of the first World War, there were many fights, hostilities between the two groups which were intensified by the language barrier.”<sup>18</sup> John H. Doiron reported that there were often brawls (or as another man dubbed them “bare knuckle” meetings<sup>19</sup>) following the election debates in St Augustine’s Hall and recounted the time when some Protestant men followed that up the next Sunday by disrupting the Catholic service, but they “were outnumbered and were soundly thrashed.”<sup>20</sup> St Mary’s Road in southern Kings County, well into the 1960s, had a reputation as a place where Protestants feared to tread, one senior from the area telling me that “he felt it wasn’t safe for a Protestant to walk up St Mary’s Road.”<sup>21</sup> Some of the Protestants remember having “sods thrown by Catholics” as they travelled on their horses

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<sup>14</sup> “WColl” 80sM1.

<sup>15</sup> “WColl” 74A2.

<sup>16</sup> “WColl” 90A4.

<sup>17</sup> For an example see “WColl” 82A2.

<sup>18</sup> “WColl” 80sP1. He recounts the story of one brawl and another from this area is told in 87G2.

<sup>19</sup> “WColl” 82M4.

<sup>20</sup> “WColl” 82M2.

<sup>21</sup> Marvin Moore of Charlottetown, conversation with author, fall, 2006. Moore was born in the late 1940s.

past the St Mary's Road corner.<sup>22</sup> Ivan Munn wryly commented: "Saturday night dances in Southern Kings often featured the cream of the Catholics from St. Mary's Road against the toughest of the Protestants. All I ever knew about that was the stories told on Monday morning of the fights. I guess relations must have improved because I don't believe any of that brawling has gone on for years."<sup>23</sup>

Not surprisingly fighting and name calling among young boys and teenagers from the different tribes was a fairly common occurrence. One man in O'Leary, born about 1929, claimed that when a boy he was jumped from behind by several Catholic boys, "Who had to drown me that afternoon simply because I was a Protestant."<sup>24</sup> One woman said in her village, which had separate schools, fighting was frequent between the two sects.<sup>25</sup> A common playground chant among Catholic children was:

Catholic, Catholic ring the bell,  
Protestant, Protestant go to hell.<sup>26</sup>

Bill Martin reported that when he grew up in the 1960s the Protestant boys would sometimes venture into the Catholic west end of Summerside to play pick up hockey: "You didn't go alone down there though, and you always had to be ready to scrap . . . the Catholics would fight us if they beat us at the hockey game, and they would fight us if they lost. It had nothing to do with religion though; it was due to the fact that they envied our socioeconomic status, and we were on their turf."<sup>27</sup> His last thought reflects the truth that often these 'religious wars' were not so much about religion as they were about socioeconomic status.

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<sup>22</sup> "WColl" 94C. See also 74A4.

<sup>23</sup> Ivan Munn of Murray Harbor, email to author, Feb 4, 2005.

<sup>24</sup> "WColl" 94E.

<sup>25</sup> "WColl" 82P1. See also MacMillan, 1835-91, pp 397-8.

<sup>26</sup> "WColl" 04G; 86B2; 82P1.

<sup>27</sup> Bill Martin of Summerside, interview by Blythe Martin, Mar 17, 2007, found in "BColl."

## Guarded Relations

In spite of these examples, which no doubt could be multiplied, sectarian-related verbal and physical fisticuffs between the two groups were in fact not common after the Orange Day Riot of 1877, nor were there many examples of real hatred or outright prejudice. The most prevalent attitude was more just that of a wariness, a ‘keep your distance’ attitude. One Charlottetonian summed it up this way: “The whole society was completely divided. It wasn’t that they didn’t get along, they just didn’t become close.”<sup>28</sup> A Protestant senior from O’Leary said: “Catholics made great neighbours. They were always ready to lend you with a helping hand. But you didn’t invite them over to socialize. Besides, the only place there was any real socializing was at church functions, so they went to their functions and we went to ours. So we were never really able to socialize well with one another.”<sup>29</sup> A Catholic senior, when asked her recollection of relations with Protestants, said it was that “preferably you did not have any.”<sup>30</sup> This wariness even extended to the sale of land, it being the practice of many during the gentlemen’s agreement period to sell their property only to people of their own sect, in order to prevent neighbourhoods from becoming mixed.<sup>31</sup>

The following interview with Roy Dickieson of New Glasgow, born in 1920, probably fairly represents many of the relationships on the Island between Protestants and Catholics. The farm next to them was owned by a large Acadian family and their oldest boy

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<sup>28</sup> “WColl” 90A3. This distancing seems to have been typical in the Atlantic Provinces. The Rev Henry Tye was born in Pictou County in 1930 and his description of Protestant-Catholic relations in this Scots-dominated area differs in no significant particulars from a typical Island community, other than that they also had the black-white divide. He summarized it all by noting that “we didn’t need to have to do with them” (Rev Henry Tye of Charlottetown, interview by author, June 21, 2005). Informal conversations I have had with other Maritimers tell a similar tale.

<sup>29</sup> “WColl” 94E.

<sup>30</sup> Sharon Doucette of North Rustico, interview by Melanie Doucette, Mar 2008, contained in “BColl.”

<sup>31</sup> For some examples see “WColl” 94G, 82N1, PsC2-3, and Dick Creed, Albion, P.E.I., letters to Kate Creed, Edmonton, Oct 27, 1912 and Jan 19, 1913, PARO 3098/25,26.

was Roy's age:

Q: How did you get along with the neighbour kids?

A: We had very little social interaction with the French boys. We used to hire some of the French boys to help with the work, and we got along fine. But I don't remember ever playing with the French. We were pretty well segregated.

Q: As a kid how did you feel about that . . . did you wish you could be friends with him?

A: No, I don't think so, I guess it's just the way it was. We were not so much told to stay away as it just happened, chiefly because they went to their French school and their Roman Catholic church, so we just didn't have much dealings with them.

Q: Did you have any instructions from your parents that you were not to play with these kids or anything like that?

A: I don't know how'd you say it but I guess the feeling was that they weren't quite as good as we were. In the early days most of the French were poor, poorer than the Protestants were. It was not that relations between the Protestant and Catholic communities were really bad, it was more a 'they went their way and we went ours.' You didn't hear too much of 'them damn Frenchmen'. . . . We didn't row with them or anything like that, its just we didn't have much to do with them.<sup>32</sup>

By the next generation this had significantly changed. Roy's daughter went to the New Glasgow school with Catholic classmates after the French school had been closed (ca 1960), and played with her Catholic neighbours. His son Wayne was one of the few Protestants in the area to go to Stella Maris High to get his grade 11 and 12.

The same wariness was exhibited on the Catholic side. In response to their historic oppression at the hands of English, Irish and Scottish Protestants in the home country and on the Island, the Catholic community, particularly the Acadians, had ghettoised themselves in order to protect themselves. This wariness occasionally led to some seemingly odd behaviour. One man from Souris said that "though he was not a radical 'Protestant hater,' he was calm yet careful when it came to any type of contact." One day he was travelling with a meat peddler and on their last stop a young woman offered them some cookies but instead of eating them he let his hand lie over the side of the wagon and slowly crumbled the cookies on to the dirt below, "Discreetly so she wouldn't know what he was doing because

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<sup>32</sup> Dickieson interview.



she had been so generous.” It was not that he thought she had poisoned them or anything it was because he was unsure of her faith and “he just couldn’t take the risk.”<sup>33</sup> Another person recalls her brother refusing a cookie from a neighbour, and explaining to his Mom, “I’ll never eat a Protestant cookie.”<sup>34</sup> Another ‘odd’ incident occurred when a Catholic women sprinkled a cow she bought from her Protestant neighbour,<sup>35</sup> while another mother sprinkled her son with holy water after he served as a groomsman for a Protestant friend in a Protestant church.<sup>36</sup> Even when a Catholic was positively disposed to a specific Protestant neighbour (and vice versa), there was still a reticence, as manifested in the common expression: “Great man! Too bad he’s a Protestant.”<sup>37</sup>

### Friendly Relations

There are, of course, a good number who reported experiencing very little friction between the two groups socially, at work or in business,<sup>38</sup> and stories of genuine kindnesses and deep friendships are not uncommon. Father William Simpson remembers as a child during the Depression carrying a big food basket from his mother to his Protestant neighbours who had fallen on especially hard times.<sup>39</sup> In the latter-half of the nineteenth-century a Protestant couple, the Isaiah Enmans of Alexandra, adopted a Catholic girl from Vernon River whose parents died when she was young. “She was reared a Catholic in a Protestant home,” married a Catholic, and she buried her father in a Protestant cemetery.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> “WColl” 05B1.

<sup>34</sup> “WColl” 94O.

<sup>35</sup> “WColl” 80’sN.

<sup>36</sup> “WColl” (05C).

<sup>37</sup> Weale, Long Way, 36.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, “WColl” 80sH1; 80sJ1-2; 80sU2; 80sW5-7.

<sup>39</sup> “WColl” PsA. For other examples see 95C; 80sU2-3.

<sup>40</sup> “WColl” 82O2.

Perhaps the most moving account concerns Eric MacEwan, one of the few Protestants who was raised in North Rustico. His cancer had got so bad that he felt he would not last the night. He then received a phone call from a monastery in Nova Scotia. The monks were holding a group prayer and healing for him that night, because he had done them a favour years ago and they were now returning it. Within hours he was feeling better and the cancer eventually completely disappeared.<sup>41</sup>

Many tell stories of close friendships with their neighbours of the other faith.<sup>42</sup> One person spoke of meeting Catholic friends at their cottage just outside of Charlottetown:

It was fortunate for me that during our summers at Inkerman my sisters and I made best friends with a family of four girls who were Catholics, and this friendship dispelled the fears and warnings of our own church, and we remain best friends to this day, and opened the doors to an interest in the rich and beautiful history in the Roman faith, which remains with me still.”<sup>43</sup>

One of these friendship stories was passed on by Mary MacPhee. Her Catholic grandfather and Mr Rose of the South Lake Christian Church were neighbours and friends who helped each other out with their farm work. Their relationship had only one oddity in it, “They never spoke or communicated to one another on Sunday.” One Sunday morning the Catholic grandmother went into labour so the grandfather sent a note asking Mr Rose to get the Catholic doctor. This he did, and after the baby was safely delivered he drove him home, all done “in splendid silence.” The next day he was over at the crack of dawn seeking after the health of mother and child. Mary MacPhee reported that her mother, who told her this story, always spoke well of her Protestant neighbours, especially Mr Rose, “who never let them down even on the day when it was apparently against his religion to

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<sup>41</sup> Eric MacEwan of North Rustico, interview by Melanie Doucette, Mar 2008, contained in “BColl.” Eric was born in 1946 and this story took place about six years ago.

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, “WColl” 86B3; 83B1; 82N1-2; PsB1-2, 4-5.

<sup>43</sup> Johanna (Crockett) Williamson of The Pas, Manitoba, email to author, Sept 5, 2005.

talk to Catholics.”<sup>44</sup>

The evaluation of some fairly objective observers is certainly relevant here, and their reports are mostly positive. A. F. Doyle, in a lecture in Boston in 1897, reported on “the kindly feeling existing at the present time in Prince Edward Island between Catholics and Protestants, of the battles fought in the past, of adherents on both sides, and how all bad feelings of former days have been buried.”<sup>45</sup> Commercial traveller W. S. Louson, just after the turn of the century, commented that:

We used to go to all kinds of churches then . . . and were undenominational in our pleasures as well as our devotions. Allow me to remark here that the people of Prince Edward Island are to be congratulated on the happy manner in which all denominations pull together. I have attended Catholic entertainments at which one half, at least, of those taking part in the programme were Protestants and vice versa. I have been to teas, concerts, bazaars, etc. where all give a helping hand. I have seen Protestant ministers conversing pleasantly with Catholic clergymen on various occasions – a sight seldom seen in other provinces.<sup>46</sup>

J. T. Croteau, the American who led the co-operative movement on the Island from 1933-47, felt Protestants and Catholics got along better there than in many parts of Canada, where the “anti-Catholic feeling is terribly bitter among a certain Protestant element -- and perhaps vice versa.”<sup>47</sup> The turn of the century seems to have been a particularly good time in Protestant-Catholic relations on the Island, as also evidenced in the friendly relations then between PWC and SDU.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> “WColl” PsK1-4; cf 93I. On certain holy days some Catholics were also prohibited from speaking to Protestants (80sA; 93B; 95J).

<sup>45</sup> Examiner, Mar 1, 1897.

<sup>46</sup> Will S. Louson, “In a Conversational Way: Observations on the Island and Its Peoples,” Prince Edward Island Magazine, Oct 1901, 298-99.

<sup>47</sup> Croteau 134.

<sup>48</sup> See Bruce, PWC, 82.

## Influential Factors

The sectarian spirit sometimes was overladen with ethnic and class factors. David Weale said his best friend Bobby Gallant, an Acadian from the west end of Summerside, “Seemed out of place when he came to my house,” and added “there was less of a split between us and them [non-Acadian Catholics], than between us and the people who were both Catholic and French; there was a double prejudice going on there I think.”<sup>49</sup> As noted earlier Catholics tended to be poorer and of a lower class. One elderly Acadian lady summarized this well: “The Catholics had an inferior feeling towards the Protestants. . . . The English prospered with good farms and nice homes, the French were struggling fishermen.”<sup>50</sup> This was especially true of the Acadian Catholics. There was also a divide between English-speaking Catholics and the Acadians that was often on par with that between English-speaking Protestants and Catholics. One Catholic recalled that “my father disliked two kinds of people, the French and Protestants.”<sup>51</sup>

There were many forces that maintained the strictness of the divide but the biggest influences were certainly the church and the home. Children were taught not to be friends with people of the other sect. One person summarized the approach of both sides as follows: “Children were always told ‘he’s not your kind’ so you ‘stay clear’ of him. If children of both religions played together this was usually stopped when they were teenagers.”<sup>52</sup> Two girls in the poor east end of Charlottetown grew up as neighbours and best friends in the mid twentieth-century. They, of course, went to different schools and the Catholic girl was told by one of her teachers, a nun, not to play with her friend because she

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<sup>49</sup> Weale interview.

<sup>50</sup> “WColl” 82P1. See also 90A3; 82L5; 82M3; 82O3.

<sup>51</sup> “WColl” 88E5. See also 94L.

<sup>52</sup> “WColl” 83A3. See also 86D.

“was a Protestant, and to find a Catholic friend to play with.”<sup>53</sup> The two girls decided to ignore this instruction. Protestant parents also taught their children not to play with the other group. One Catholic woman remembered going to a Protestant home and the grandmother yelling down, “Leave those goddamn Catholics on the road.”<sup>54</sup> The prohibition was not always stated in direct terms but might be more like “there is no need to play with that little girl,” or “there is no need for you to go out with that boy.”<sup>55</sup> There were also, of course, examples of parents and religious leaders who passed on more enlightened attitudes but they were not the norm.

At times it almost seemed like the sectarian attitudes were imbibed with the mother’s milk. One teenage girl worked at a playground in the east end of Charlottetown in the late-1950s, where nearly all the children were Catholic. They just assumed she was Catholic but after being there for several weeks she mentioned that she had gone to Prince Street School when she was their age:

Complete silence fell on the circle and I found myself confronting a dozen pairs of young eyes full of shock. Then one of the little girls asked hesitatingly . . . “then you are a Protestant?” “Yes.” Another long pause broken by the little girl taking a long breath: “Oh well. Our teacher told us there were some good Protestants.” A general sigh and some head nodding went around the circle, and we settled back to planning a game. But I will never forget the struggle of conscience in my small friend’s eyes.<sup>56</sup>

Harriet Meacher, sister to former Premier Alex Campbell, informed me that as a teenager she taught swimming lessons in Summerside in 1957. She noticed when she would get the children to stand in a circle for games that the ones on her right side would hold hands as would those on her left, but they would never complete the circle. She found out that the

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<sup>53</sup> “WColl” 04C2.

<sup>54</sup> “WColl” 94N. For other examples see 95K; 90A3; 88E4,8; 86A7; 82K1; 80sJ1-2.

<sup>55</sup> “WColl” 00J.

<sup>56</sup> Letter to author, Nov 16, 2007. The correspondent, from Charlottetown, asked me to not use her name.

reason for this was solely because of their religious differences. One group was Protestant and the other Catholic, and they imitated the rift in their own little circle that they had witnessed in their parents. She also soon realized that when they ‘buddied up’ it was always with someone of the same faith. All her efforts to break down this divide failed.<sup>57</sup>

### Dating and Inter-marriage

The divide made its deepest personal impact, and was most jealously guarded, around the issues of dating and marriage: “The main issue, that I remember, was just the dating business, that was obviously the heart of the matter. If you are going to keep two tribes apart, that’s how you do it, you just don’t let them interbreed.”<sup>58</sup> Akenson asks of Ireland how it was possible to keep two such similar groups as the Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants apart and concluded it was due to two things, “The enforcement of denominational endogamy” and the segregation of children in their schooling. He says that these structures, however, were intentionally put in place by the people of their own volition, in order to achieve their goal of keeping the two tribes apart,<sup>59</sup> and much the same thing happened on P.E.I.

The prohibition against interfaith dating and mixed marriages was forcefully enjoined on both sides of the divide. If they agreed on nothing else they were at least unanimous on this, that one should “keep to your own kind,”<sup>60</sup> or as one person expressed it: “Robins [Protestants] never marry crows [Catholics].”<sup>61</sup> Another said it was just wrong, “Like

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<sup>57</sup> Harriet Meacher of Stanley Bridge, conversation with author, Nov 2007.

<sup>58</sup> Weale interview.

<sup>59</sup> Akenson 109.

<sup>60</sup> “WColl” 83A3; 80sL3; 78A2-3.

<sup>61</sup> “WColl” 80sO.

marrying a black person.”<sup>62</sup> A humorous story is told of an inter-faith couple on the eastern part of the Island who had lived ‘common law’ for twenty years. A priest suggested they make their relationship “legal in the eyes of God.” The lady responded, “Dear God, Father, you’re not suggesting I marry a Protestant.”<sup>63</sup>

While the feelings against mixed marriage were probably equally strong on both sides the Catholic attitude was more formalized. Mixed marriages were permitted in the Catholic church if the spouse converted, which of course meant it was not really a mixed marriage. The non-Catholic partner was encouraged to take catechism lessons and convert.<sup>64</sup> This was by the far the most common reason for conversion, not unlike the situation today in the west where most converts to Islam are a result of mixed marriages. They were also deemed acceptable if the Protestant spouse agreed to raise the children Catholic.<sup>65</sup> Some priests taught that the couple in a mixed marriage were not really married,<sup>66</sup> that the marriage was not recognized in heaven and that the couple lived in a constant state of sin.<sup>67</sup> It was also not uncommon for people to believe that they “would go to hell if you married a Protestant.”<sup>68</sup> Mixed marriages could not be performed in the sanctuary<sup>69</sup> and instead were often conducted in the porch or back of the church,<sup>70</sup> even in the priest’s office in the Parochial House.<sup>71</sup> Catholics marrying outside the church were also

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<sup>62</sup> “WColl” 95D.

<sup>63</sup> “WColl” 82J.

<sup>64</sup> “WColl” 88E5-6.

<sup>65</sup> “WColl” 88E5; 82B1; 82C2; 82P2; 78B. This was also related to me in numerous conversations.

<sup>66</sup> “WColl” 95M; 94I; 82D1-2; 80sH2.

<sup>67</sup> “WColl” 82C1.

<sup>68</sup> “WColl” 82H. See also 95H; 94C

<sup>69</sup> “WColl” 82C1. Also related to me in many conversations.

<sup>70</sup> “WColl” 88D; 87I; 78B.

<sup>71</sup> Green 13.

refused the sacraments and could not be buried in a Catholic cemetery.<sup>72</sup> If a Catholic dated a Protestant he or she would have to repent of this at confession.<sup>73</sup> In cases where the Catholic spouse followed the other's faith sometimes "the only way to rejoin the flock was public penance. This involved kneeling in front of the congregation and repenting your sin . . . [after which] you were once again a Catholic."<sup>74</sup>

This injunction was proclaimed equally fervently by parents and religious leaders,<sup>75</sup> and was re-enforced at all levels in the community. Some parents even made inheritance conditional upon their children marrying the right kind. As one Protestant explained to his children, "He had no Catholic land."<sup>76</sup> Parents not only inculcated this attitude into their own children but on occasion communicated the same message to potential suitors from the other side. One Catholic boy had become close friends with a Protestant girl and her family. The father pulled him aside one day and said: "Andy, I love you like a son, but don't ever take out my daughter."<sup>77</sup>

This prohibition against mixed marriage reflected the centrality of faith for many Islanders. Father Allan MacDonald did his MA thesis on Portage, a typical Catholic parish in mid twentieth-century rural P.E.I. He discovered a high level of religious observance in which:

Almost all adults prayed at home, went to mass on Sundays, . . . married Catholics, and died strengthened by 'extreme unction.' . . . Their forefathers were Catholic to the core, and the people have retained this faith. The importance of their religion was the basis of their opposition to anything that

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<sup>72</sup> "WColl" 94V1.

<sup>73</sup> "WColl" 04I.

<sup>74</sup> "WColl" 82I. Cf 94K.

<sup>75</sup> See, for example, "WColl" 00I4; 82B1,K1 (priests); 94M (nuns); Williamson email (ministers); 93R, 90A3a; 82P1; 80sH1 (Catholic parents); 93H; Mair letter; 78A2-3 (Protestant parents).

<sup>76</sup> "WColl" 94A. See also 00K; 94G.

<sup>77</sup> "WColl" 93T. Cf 80sW5=87J; Clay 5.



might lead to the weakening of this faith, such as mixed marriage. . . . They prayed as a family and taught their children to pray. They helped others in time of need, and they shared with neighbours of all faiths. . . . All in all, while they displayed their own forms of deviancy - neighbourhood wrangles, abuse of alcohol, violating prohibition regulations, poaching and what have you - they lived, in the lights of the times, a pretty authentic Christianity.<sup>78</sup>

As such the prohibition was often motivated by prudence – marriage is not easy and being disunited in religious practice does not make it any easier. Still according to some reports the motives sometimes did not seem to rise much above common, old-fashioned prejudice. One Protestant mother, for example, was greatly opposed to her daughter marrying a Catholic because “she had visions of a dozen wet-nosed little kids running around in diapers,” and another simply did not want “Catholic blood in her grandchildren.”<sup>79</sup>

Interfaith dating did occur,<sup>80</sup> of course, though it was far from common and most often was carried out in secret. In Little Pond a Protestant widow began dating a Catholic bachelor. “Sparks flew immediately” but he had to “sneak out at night, park his truck a respectable distance from [her] house, and they could never be seen together in company.” The Catholic sister uncovered the “shenanigans” and the relationship soon after disintegrated.<sup>81</sup> The necessity for such secretiveness continued in some circles long after the schools were desegregated<sup>82</sup> and still on a rare occasion is required. Some relationships, however, were open and accepted, two quite famous examples being that of Andrew A. Macdonald (Island Father of Confederation, 1829-1912, a Catholic) and Elizabeth Owen (Anglican), and Samuel Robertson (PWC President from 1901-37 and a Church of Scotland elder) and Annie Laura McGrath (a professor at PWC from a strong Catholic family).<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> A. Macdonald, “Fifty,” 122-3. Cf the census data on p 281, n12.

<sup>79</sup> “WColl” 88E10; 94T. These reports come from relatives of the mothers.

<sup>80</sup> “WColl” 93H; 93N (referring to the Belfast area); 87F.

<sup>81</sup> “WColl” 94B.

<sup>82</sup> “WColl” 86A3-4.

<sup>83</sup> See Bruce, PWC, 124-5.

To maintain these strictures it naturally enough followed that dances were usually segregated. In Charlottetown, up until the latter half of the 1960s, Protestants could not attend dances sponsored by the C.Y.O. (Catholic Youth Organization) and Catholics could only attend C.Y.O. socials.<sup>84</sup> While dances at the Holy Name Hall (the precursor to the Basilica Recreation Centre) were for Catholics only, and some people informed me that only Catholics went, a significant number of informants also said that some Protestants (girls especially) also managed to sneak in.<sup>85</sup> Faith was an equally significant issue in regard to the dances at the Y.M.C.A. Diane O'Hanley, an Irish Catholic born in 1951, went to a dance at the 'Y' in the spring of 1966 in search of a particularly "cute looking Protestant fellow." The ticket taker at the door did not recognize her and asked for her name. She blurted out her obviously Catholic name. He responded, "You can't come in here, you have your own place," meaning the Basilica.<sup>86</sup> A Catholic male told me that he experienced the same thing around the same time. The Roll-a-Way (a private dance hall in Charlottetown) was mixed, however, "But the Catholics would be dancing in their group and the 'other ones' would be dancing over there. It was the same music but we weren't allowed to mix . . . oh no!"<sup>87</sup> The same division was evident in Summerside, though it was slightly more blurred there. Dances in rural communities were also often segregated. Catholics never went to the dances at Eldon Hall, just down the road from the Belfast Church, because "that was Protestant territory." Protestants of the area were, however, more likely to go to the dances in nearby Catholic Iona, though one still had to be careful to dance with one's 'own kind.'<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> "WColl" 94V2.

<sup>85</sup> Based on discussions with my Seniors College Class, other seniors and Jones's letter.

<sup>86</sup> O'Hanley email.

<sup>87</sup> "WColl" 95T.

<sup>88</sup> "WColl" 93R.

Mixed marriages were not very common on the Island until after Vatican II. From 1832-72 there were 616 marriages of Irish Catholics at the Basilica in Charlottetown and only one was a marriage to a Protestant.<sup>89</sup> “The mixed marriage rate . . . which had remained fairly constant (7-8%) until the sixties, increased to thirty-six percent in 1976,” and is probably closer to 45% today.<sup>90</sup> In comparison, Ontario’s rate of mixed marriages for Irish Catholics between 1911 and 1921 fluctuated between 25 and 36 percent. Elsewhere in Canada, by the 1920s, 15 to 18 percent of Catholics outside Quebec, including notable Francophone or ethnic enclaves, married outside of the faith.<sup>91</sup> P.E.I.’s lower rate of mixed marriage is likely due, at least in part, to the fact that Catholics were a much higher percentage of the population there than they were in the other Maritime Provinces and Ontario, which in turn made the courtship opportunities a little bit better there and allowed both groups to remain in their own tightly guarded conclave.<sup>92</sup>

Probably most often the faith followed by the children in a mixed marriage was Catholic but there are also many examples of the children being raised Protestant. While it was common that the children all be raised in one faith or the other it was also not rare to see the boys raised to follow their father’s faith and the girls the mother’s. One noteworthy example of this John Fenton Newbery, the great grandson of John Newbery, whom the children’s literature medal is named after. He married an Italian girl, and they agreed to raise the boys Anglican and the girls Catholic. They lived in Italy for twenty years but shortly after moving to Halifax in 1858 she died while giving birth to her fifteenth child. Soon after that the family moved to Rocky Point, P.E.I. Newbery honoured his promise to

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<sup>89</sup> See O’Grady 188-9.

<sup>90</sup> A. MacDonald, “Fifty” 122-3.

<sup>91</sup> Mark G. McGowan, “Irish Catholics in Canada,” The Encyclopedia of Canada's Peoples, <http://multiculturalcanada.ca/Encyclopedia/A-Z/i8/12>, s.v. “Intergroup Relations.

<sup>92</sup> For some discussion of inter-faith and inter-ethnic marriages see P. McGuigan, “Lot 22,” pp 68-70 and “Lot 61,” p 37.

his wife and sent the girls to Notre Dame Academy. One of them became a nun and one of the boys an evangelist. According to family tradition, relations among them were good.<sup>93</sup>

While Islanders often speak of their past attitudes regarding mixed dating and marriages with much bemusement, still the reality behind the humour is often tragic. Many couples and families paid a very high price for their choice, "Families -- even communities -- could be torn apart by a single matrimonial mishap."<sup>94</sup> In the vast majority of cases mixed marriages led to a lot of division in families and often loss of friends, and a great deal of inner turmoil for the couple. In many cases the family refused to attend the wedding ceremony.<sup>95</sup> One person reported that their whole family cried for a day.<sup>96</sup> Families generally felt greatly disgraced in the eyes of the community if their child married outside the faith.<sup>97</sup> Catholics who married outside the church were often excommunicated and refused religious services.<sup>98</sup> The extreme social and family pressure against inter-marriage frequently resulted in the forced breakup of 'love struck', and often even engaged, couples.<sup>99</sup> It also led to forced divorces,<sup>100</sup> forced elopements<sup>101</sup> and couples being left with no choice but to leave home and community.<sup>102</sup> Regularly the couples were disowned by their families.<sup>103</sup> A Catholic reported that her extended family completely ignored her family

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<sup>93</sup> Dorothy Forsythe, interview by author, Jan 27, 2009. She is the great-granddaughter of John Fenton Newbery.

<sup>94</sup> David Weale, Them Times, 52.

<sup>95</sup> "WColl" 95H.

<sup>96</sup> "WColl" 95H.

<sup>97</sup> "WColl" 94C; 90A3a.

<sup>98</sup> "WColl" 94V1; 88E6; 83A3; 82K1; 82I; 82C1.

<sup>99</sup> Frank Ledwell, Island Sketchbook (Charlottetown: Acorn Press, 2004), 60-66; "WColl" 94S, 94B, 93M, 93L, 83C2, 80sH1, PsC2.

<sup>100</sup> "WColl" 87H; 83C1-2; 82D1-2.

<sup>101</sup> "WColl" 95O; 94R; 93J; 88A7.

<sup>102</sup> "WColl" 00I5; 82M3; PsC2.

<sup>103</sup> "WColl" 88E6; 83A3; 82I; 82K1; 80sL3.

for nearly 20 years and during this period if they met her or her children on the street would walk to the other side in order to avoid them.<sup>104</sup> One staunch Presbyterian grandmother “could not accept the marriage between her granddaughter and one ‘of another kind.’ So . . . she refused to associate with [them] and any of the eight great grandchildren whom she would never meet.”<sup>105</sup> Even when none of these things occurred often there was simply sown “a spirit of disunity . . . at the heart of family life,”<sup>106</sup> and the pain for many seniors is still palpable today.<sup>107</sup>

### Conclusion

The oral accounts in this chapter reveal somewhat of a mixed story. In some communities, among some people, in certain activities, at certain times, relations between Protestants and Catholics were quite positive and open. Still the general rule was that they were generally characterized by a guardedness and wary suspicion, which on occasion descended into bigotry and hostility, though rarely physical violence. Gentlemen’s agreements governed many of the interactions and often eased tensions, but also enabled the two sects to remain in their safe bubbles. There was no gentlemen’s agreement, however, around inter-marriage and inter-faith dating. Both religious communities were in full accord on the inadvisability of these practices. In many ways it was the issue that was at the heart of the whole divide, and therefore the area most jealousy guarded. It was also the area in which the divide took its greatest personal toll. The following chapter will continue with this mixed story, and the central role of school separation or integration in it, as it looks at how the divide was manifested in various Island communities.

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<sup>104</sup> “WColl” 80sE.

<sup>105</sup> “WColl” 82G1-3.

<sup>106</sup> Green, Mind, 16.

<sup>107</sup> For one example see Green, Mind, 11-16.

## CHAPTER 16

### COMMUNITY RELATIONS: THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE DIVIDE

Most rural Island communities had either a large majority of Protestants or Catholics. People of the same faith generally clustered together with a few ‘odd ones’ from the other side scattered amongst them. These communities were often adjacent to each other – thus in the area bordering southern Queens and Prince Counties Kinkora, Emerald and Kelly’s Cross were Catholic, while nearby Crapaud, Tryon and Rose Valley were Protestant. This could be reduced to specific roads in some instances, as one resident of southern Kings noted: “I grew up in Glen William which is on the Peters Road, the parallel road was St. Mary’s Road. St. Mary’s Road was considered ‘Catholic’, while we were ‘Protestant’.”<sup>1</sup> Another Islander commented: “It seemed as though for every Catholic community there was a neighbouring Protestant one. . . . ‘We lived on the Line of the Lot Road, and our house was the last Protestant house on the road. After that the road was solid Catholic.’”<sup>2</sup> This is confirmed in the census of 1921, which shows that the three counties, all of the major towns on the Island and three quarters of the 67 Lots were religiously mixed.<sup>3</sup> The coloured map attached to the back page (cf Appendix B) shows the distribution of the population by faith. In this section I will try to give a little substance to this map to show the varying ways the divide expressed itself in the different communities.

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<sup>1</sup> MacInnis email.

<sup>2</sup> “WColl” 04A1.

<sup>3</sup> The Protestant composition of the 67 lots break down as follows: 90%+ (11); 61-89% (21); 40-60% (19); 11-39% (9); -10% (7).

## Strained or Distant Relations

While the larger centers and some rural areas were mixed religiously most areas on the Island were either Orange or Green, which meant that a good number of people never met a person of the other faith until they left home to go to school or work. Mary Peardon of mixed Montague said of communities like Catholic Iona and Protestant Murray Harbor that they “were places where the inhabitants were exposed to only one religion, and because of this ‘narrowness’ of experience the people of these regions tended to look upon someone of the opposite religion in awe -- probably quite surprised to find that the person involved did not have two heads.”<sup>4</sup> Dr Weale similarly commented that “children who grew up hearing so much about the ‘Black Protestants’ . . . were [often] surprised upon first seeing one, by how normal their colouring was.”<sup>5</sup>

One of the most homogeneous Protestant areas was the Murray River / Murray Harbor area. Ivan Munn (b 1933), who comes from there, wrote: “To me coming from eastern P.E.I., Catholics were like Unicorns. I had read about them, but never actually met one until I got to Prince of Wales. We did have one Catholic in Murray River and I often saw him at a distance, but I was careful not to get near him.”<sup>6</sup> On the other side, one Catholic reported that “I didn’t know there was anybody who was anything other than Catholic until I was about fifteen or sixteen.”<sup>7</sup>

People’s experience of the divide varied somewhat from community to community. More often than not in rural areas and small towns there was little contact between people of the two sects, and while there was rarely open animosity they generally viewed the other side with suspicion and kept a wary distance from them. One correspondent told me:

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<sup>4</sup> “WColl” PsD.

<sup>5</sup> “WColl” 95L.

<sup>6</sup> Munn email. See also Weale, Whatever, 45, and “WColl” 95B.

<sup>7</sup> Weale, Whatever, 45. See also “WColl” 90A4, 95L.

As a child I lived on a farm in Hamilton, PE . . . a protestant community. The neighbouring community, Indian River was the catholic community. Each had their own school and community hall [and church]. Each community felt superior to the other although there was very little open animosity.<sup>8</sup>

Yet another source said: “In the 1870s, Catholics and Protestants in the Milton area had little contact. Protestants saw the Acadian Catholics in Rustico and the Irish Catholics to the west as a threat to their own way of life.”<sup>9</sup>

Souris and its surrounding environs has a mixed picture in terms of the relations between the two sects in the area. Souris itself is just over 80% Catholic and much of the surrounding area is likewise heavily Catholic, but Protestants dominate both to the east (the southeastern half of the Peninsula past Red Point) and west (Fortune Bay area) of the town. To this day effectively everyone in the area belongs to one sect or the other. As one teen from Souris recently informed his friend, “If you are not Protestant or Catholic then you do not live in Souris.”<sup>10</sup> This is not just his subjective impression. In the 2006 census Souris had a population of 1232. Only twenty were foreign born (all in the U.S.A.), and only 2% of the population in the 2001 census had no religious affiliation; the rest were Protestant or Catholic.

While the relationship between the two sects in the area east of Souris has been quite good,<sup>11</sup> the same does not seem to have been true in and around the town of Souris itself, one source commenting that “the religions were very hostile towards the other.” He then cited an instance where one time when he was at the school, while the children were saying the Rosary, a Protestant lady who was visiting grabbed the prayer beads out of one of the children’s hands and smashed them, explaining she was “sick of listening to the damn

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<sup>8</sup> Bev McCormick, formerly of Hamilton P.E.I., email to author, Aug 29, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> “WColl” 83C1.

<sup>10</sup> Mila Profitt of Charlottetown, interview by author, Aug 30, 2007.

<sup>11</sup> This corresponds roughly to Lots 46 and 47 which were about 70% Catholic in 1921 and 50% in 2001.



Catholics praying all the time.”<sup>12</sup> Even to this day the divide probably continues stronger in Souris than anywhere else on the Island, at least among the young people, who speak of the unwritten rule that local teenagers must park in the appropriate parking area for their religion at the liquor store or risk a fight, while some Catholic teenagers report that they had no Protestant friends.<sup>13</sup> My sense, though unconfirmed, is that the young people have divided themselves into two ‘tribes’ as young people are wont to do, and as the social marker that most clearly distinguishes them from each other is their religion, so the division has naturally enough followed this fault line. This is similar to the situation in Glasgow, Scotland, where sectarianism is not so much the cause of the dispute as it has just provided the language for it: “The term ‘Catholic’ and ‘Protestant’ are important symbols of solidarity which many Celtic and Ranger [football] fans respectively choose to identify with. But their allegiance to these symbols is tribal rather than doctrinal and there is usually little that is Christian or spiritual about it . . . .”<sup>14</sup>

Certainly the most negative expression of the divide was seen in the two largest centres, particularly Charlottetown, both of which were split about 50/50 and were extremely divided socially. Former MP, the Rev David MacDonald, told me he saw the deepest religious differences in the province as being in Charlottetown and Alberton (the community he ministered in during the early-1960s).<sup>15</sup> One high school teacher was of the opinion that “Charlottetown is probably the worst small city for being anti-Catholic and anti-Protestant” and related this to the school divide.<sup>16</sup> John Eldon Green spoke in his

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<sup>12</sup> “WColl” 86A6-7.

<sup>13</sup> M. Profitt interview.

<sup>14</sup> Gallagher 1. This is not to suggest that the sectarian feelings in Souris are in any way as intense as they are surrounding football in Glasgow.

<sup>15</sup> Rev David MacDonald of Ottawa, interview by author, Aug 17, 2005.

<sup>16</sup> Cited in Errol Sharpe, et al (compilers), “Views of Teachers on Higher Education” #133, found in M.N. Beck Papers (U.P.E.I. - Origins - University Study Group - Beck Papers, vertical file, folder #2, # LXXXII), in the U.P.E.I. Archives.

memoirs of “the deep social pathology that characterized life in Charlottetown”<sup>17</sup> when he moved there in the 1950s. Friendships were rare, Helen MacDonald (David’s mother) reporting that “when I was growing up here, the Protestants and the Roman Catholics did not mix, we just didn’t mix at all.”<sup>18</sup> Lester Selleck wrote of Charlottetown that “the rivalry between Catholics and Protestants was strong, almost vicious, in my day.”<sup>19</sup>

There was ghettoisation in housing, due primarily to the fact that Protestants tended to be wealthier than Catholics (though poorer Protestants could be found as well in the ‘Catholic’ areas). I could as a child, for example, point to the exact line several hundred yards down my street where the territory changed from Protestant to Catholic and one always felt a little fearful walking through it. David Weale said the same thing in speaking of the “zones” in Charlottetown: “There were neutral zones, a lot of streets and places, but there were places that were one or the other. If you were in the East end of Charlottetown, for instance . . . you knew you were in a Catholic zone, and you would have that little bit of uncomfortable feeling.”<sup>20</sup> The same ghettoisation held true in Summerside. The West End was Acadian Catholic, the centre of town where the nicer homes were was Protestant for the most part, as was the northern part, and the eastern end and newer areas were mixed. Even in the eastern end, however, streets were usually entirely either Protestant or Catholic.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> This quote is from the first page of an earlier draft of chapter 7 of his autobiography which he sent to me.

<sup>18</sup> Green interview by Helen MacDonald, in M.N. Beck, *Social Activist*, 2127. See also Green 157-8.

<sup>19</sup> Selleck 40.

<sup>20</sup> Weale interview. See p 215 for introduction to this quote.

<sup>21</sup> Based on the author’s interview with Weale, and the Martin interview.

## Harmonious Community Relations

Some rural communities and small towns, however, did experience quite good and open relationships between members of the two sects. In districts where nearly everybody belonged to one sect or the other the general rule seems to have been that there were friendly relations between the people of the dominant group and their few neighbours of the minority faith sprinkled among them.<sup>22</sup> Sociologically, of course, this can be accounted for on the basis that they would not be perceived as a threat. More local causes, however, must be brought in to explain why other areas, which did have a good size sampling of both sects, experienced positive relations.

According to Wade MacLauchlan in the rural area of Stanhope, where he grew up, there was much harmony,<sup>23</sup> and others testify to the same thing. One of my students interviewed eight seniors from this area and nearly all agreed with him, Catholic Joe McCabe affirming: “Stanhope was probably the best place for a Catholic to grow up on the Island. Everyone respected the other.”<sup>24</sup> The school and the Women’s Institute served as the main uniting forces in the community. The school did have Bible readings and the Lord’s Prayer but the Catholic children participated in both. Still the interviewer felt that she was not getting the full story, and commented that there was a bit of a “let the past stay in the past” thing going on, and they did not want to “air their dirty laundry.” All, of course, admitted to tensions around inter-marriage, and interestingly all spoke of the strained relations just before an election, but only one interviewee really opened up on some of the underlying tensions:

There was a tremendous amount of anti-Catholic [feeling]. All the worst elements were emphasized. The Roman Catholic practices such as the confessional and evening rosary were . . . ridiculed [as pagan]. . . There were

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<sup>22</sup> See, for example, “WColl” 05B2; 04D (Fanningbrook); 80sU2-3.

<sup>23</sup> Wade MacLauchlan of Stanhope, conversation with author, fall 2004.

<sup>24</sup> These interviews can be found in Morin.

always undertones in Stanhope. One incident comes to mind. All the gravestones in the Protestant cemetery were tipped over. Of course everyone knew the Catholic family that did it. . . . It took a long time for that issue to settle. . . . There were two doctors in the community or the neighboring community; one Catholic and one Protestant. The Catholic would go to the Catholic doctor and the Protestant would go to the Protestant doctor. When one doctor would go away the other would cover for him. Well, some would just about die before they'd go to the wrong doctor.

It is hard in these situations, where reports are somewhat contradictory, to precisely determine whether they reflect differences in people's experience, or if some reporters are perhaps covering up the sectarian differences or alternatively exaggerating them.

The village of St Peter's and the surrounding area, which is roughly evenly split, is another community that has had commendable relations between the sects. Lifelong resident Thomas Ledwell said that "the two religious groups lived in great harmony . . . mutual respect and neighbourly friendship."<sup>25</sup> These open feelings seem to go back to the beginning of the settlement under the British and to have continued right up to the present.<sup>26</sup> Locals went to dances and sporting events together. They attended funerals, weddings, church suppers and special services held in the other sect's church buildings. The priest was not only expected to be in attendance at Protestant funerals but was given a seat of honour in the front pew as well. This honour was reciprocated, for at the ordination of a priest the United Church minister and a Protestant family were assigned reserved seats in the front row of the Catholic Church.<sup>27</sup> When Roddy Pratt's 23 year old sister died in 1942, "The Priest said prayers for her at the [Catholic] church and came down to the house and said prayers at the house, which was unheard of, and went up to the pulpit in the United Church

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<sup>25</sup> T. Ledwell emails. See also "WColl" PsG.

<sup>26</sup> Examiner, Mar 11, 1848; June 7, 1869; Clara C. Pratt, A Brief History of St Peter's Bay (no publishing information), 9-11 (for an example from 1895). For twentieth-century examples see Harold Thompson of St Peter's, interview by Cody MacInnis, Mar 10, 2008, in "BColl;" Frank Ledwell, The North Shore of Home (Halifax: Nimbus, 1986), 52-61; and Rossiter 241-2.

<sup>27</sup> F. Ledwell, North Shore, 52-61.

and helped in the service.”<sup>28</sup> Still, in spite of all this, historian Marian Bruce noted that “not everybody in St. Peter’s believes that the mingling of faiths in the village has been entirely harmonious,”<sup>29</sup> and certainly “mixed marriages were discouraged in the most severe fashion,”<sup>30</sup> but clearly it exhibited much more goodwill than most other Island communities.

The Ledwell brothers trace this harmony back to the roots, noting that most of the major immigration took place in the early pioneer days when survival was more important than religion and there were few clerics, and that most people were of the same culture (Scottish) and therefore shared similar values. A more recent influence was World War II, both the camaraderie experienced by the soldiers and the building of the Legion Hall after the war which led to mixed dances.<sup>31</sup> There was also the leavening influence of the local clergy, from Bishop Angus MacEachern<sup>32</sup> to Father MacAulay (1898-1973), who was loved by all, had Protestant relatives and quoted his Protestant barber in the pulpit.<sup>33</sup> The school system, however, probably played the key role. Though the community had two schools, this was a result not of religion but geography, one being on the north side of the bridge and the other on the south (about two kilometres apart), but they were both mixed religiously. The Women’s Institute, which was very strong in the area, similarly played a major role in helping “to bring people together and to override religious differences while still respecting them.”<sup>34</sup>

The town of Georgetown (61% Catholic in 1961) also experienced much openness

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<sup>28</sup> Cited in Marian Bruce, “Looking Back: St Peters Bay,” Island Magazine 50 (Fall/Winter 2001): 5.

<sup>29</sup> M. Bruce, “St Peters,” 5.

<sup>30</sup> “WColl” PsC2.

<sup>31</sup> T. Ledwell emails.

<sup>32</sup> See p 83 for a beautiful story of his ministry to an ancestor of Roddie Pratt.

<sup>33</sup> F. Ledwell, North Shore, 56. See also “WColl” PsC2.

<sup>34</sup> F. Ledwell, North Shore, 56.

between the two groups. The Rev Nathan Mair, a retired United Church minister who grew up in Georgetown, reported that:

Protestants and Catholics in Georgetown worked side by side on weekdays at fishing, farm work, on the docks, and in community events. The two groups were represented on the Board of Assessors in the early days and later when Georgetown became an incorporated town on the Town Council. They sat together on the school trustee board [half of each], the Agricultural Society, and on the committees which organized the horse races, carnivals, sport days, and regattas. They played together in ball games and hockey and at card parties . . . The veterans of the wars participated in Legion events . . . unhampered by denominational loyalties. Catholic and Protestant children attended the same school and sat in the same classes.<sup>35</sup>

Though perhaps not intended by Mair the final line really could be seen as the cause of much of the preceding realities, but Georgetown also used elite accommodation to help maintain good relations: “Until the 1960s an unwritten rule demanded that all elective and appointed posts in the town should be rotated between the two major religious divisions . . . including the school principal, the post master, the station master and government appointees of various descriptions.”<sup>36</sup> The Town Council would be made up of three Catholics and three Protestants (also three Liberals and three Conservatives) who would in turn appoint the mayor from among their numbers on a rotating basis. The precise division seems to have been maintained by the policy of the former council nominating the people for the following elections.<sup>37</sup>

Other mixed places about which the reports are almost always positive include the northeastern tip of the Island past Souris,<sup>38</sup> Panmure Island,<sup>39</sup> Lot Seven in Prince County,<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Mair letter.

<sup>36</sup> Mair letter.

<sup>37</sup> Rev Nathan Mair of Georgetown, interview by author, Mar 6, 2008.

<sup>38</sup> “WColl” PsI, *Guardian*, Feb 4,5, 2008.

<sup>39</sup> Paul MacDonald email.

<sup>40</sup> John Cousins, conversation with author, Mar 19, 2009. See also Donnie Doyle, *Along Lot Seven Shore* (Charlottetown: Acorn Press, 2000), 51.

and the towns of Montague (70% Protestant in 1921)<sup>41</sup> and Kensington (82% Protestant in 1951).<sup>42</sup> In nearly all of these communities one also hears oral reports of negative relations, but this is a minor theme, and nowhere were inter-faith dating and marriage deemed acceptable. The same general unitive influences were at work in most of these places as in the examples above, but by far the most important factor was that the schools were mixed (and so too, therefore, were the Women's Institutes). Particularly when one compares Charlottetown and Summerside (which were large enough to accommodate separate schools) to the towns of Montague, Georgetown and Kensington (which were not), one sees the wisdom of not having sectarian schools; for in these areas good friendships between Protestants and Catholics seem to have been quite commonplace, there was no divide in housing or businesses, and occasionally they would even attend each other's religious services.

### Conclusion

The main theme that runs through all of this is that the biggest factor affecting Protestant-Catholic relations on the Island was whether the schools were integrated or mixed. In communities that were not mixed the people tended to be wary of the other sect and kept a safe distance from them; in communities that were religiously mixed but their schools were not, relations between the two groups was at their worst; but in communities that were religiously mixed and had but one school relations were at their best, though never completely without some negative undercurrents. Other factors did come into play that affected relations in the community, ranging from historical particularities in a specific community to clergy attitudes and relations, but none of them override Green's dictum that

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<sup>41</sup> See, for example, Lanigan and Graham emails, and Helen Killorn of Charlottetown, letter to the author, Aug 29, 2005, both in "BColl"; "WColl" PsD; Daily Examiner, Feb 9, 1906.

<sup>42</sup> Marvin Clark, formerly of Kensington, conversation with author, fall 2004.

“the school system was the anchor barrier to community.” It is only with the forced integration of the schools that the sectarian breach on the Island is mended, a story briefly recounted in the next section.



## EPILOGUE:

### THE BRIDGING OF THE PROTESTANT-CATHOLIC DIVIDE (1966-PRESENT)

Though outside the immediate scope of this thesis it will be helpful to give a brief indication of how this longstanding and deep divide in Island society was bridged.

The key factor in mending the divide was intentional dismantling of the *de facto* separate school system by Island leaders. This dismantling began in 1957 and continued until 1969, and with its successful denouement the other institutional and personal divides on the Island likewise soon crumbled. Francis Cogliano credited the remarkable change in attitudes towards Catholics during and after the Revolution in New England to the active campaign of the Whig political, military, ecclesiastical and media elite,<sup>1</sup> while Americans were seeking to attain French support for the revolution. In Prince Edward Island it was also a top-down approach but there, as some of the community's leaders initiated the changes (often amid intense opposition) they came to realize that the silent majority were also on their side.

In 1957 Island Catholics and Protestants were living fairly benignly together, for the most part in their own little enclaves, but without a lot of overt tension unless a family member had begun to date one of the 'wrong kind.' The gentlemen's agreements had achieved their goals, not that of rich, harmonious relations but that of making sure there was very little overt disharmony. The same tactics had produced the same results in the other Maritime Provinces. What had forced the Island's elite to adopt this

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<sup>1</sup> Francis D. Cogliano, No King, No Popery: Anti-Catholicism in Revolutionary New England (New York: Greenwood Press, 1995), 2.

accommodationist tactic was the bitter sectarian squabbling that had so deeply divided the Island in the education wars of 1856-77. What forced them to end it was a second round of sectarian / education wars that extended from 1957-1969. In the 1950s the 'times' had forced Islanders to upgrade and modernize their education system and it was this reality that forced buried sectarian tensions back to the surface of Island political debate.

It all began with the controversy over teacher training at SDU in the spring of 1957, a century after the Bible Question arose. John Eldon Green termed this a "last great belch of intolerance,"<sup>2</sup> and it would be, in fact, the first of the last four 'great belches of intolerance' over the next decade, all again centred on education issues. The next three great sectarian belches, in chronological sequence, were the battles over sectarian schools in Summerside (1959-61), Prince of Wales becoming a university (1960-5), and the struggle to attain one university for the Island (1964-9), the last and hardest fought. There were also three other educational issues during this time - the consolidation of rural schools (1959-76), the ending of the gentlemen's agreements in the Charlottetown public schools (1961-7), and the uniting of the schools of nursing (1963-9). While they all, especially the first two, played a major role in breaking down the divide, they did not, like the 'four belches,' spark extensive sectarian squabbling. With the successful denouement of these battles the sectarian spirit on the Island dissipated, though it did not completely disappear.

Ted Redmond, the first Catholic principal at Queen Charlotte High School in the late-1960s, was probably correct in dating the end of the sectarian divide on P.E.I. to September 1966, the year Colonel Gray High School was launched in Charlottetown as an intentionally mixed school.<sup>3</sup> After this, and the subsequent ending of the gentlemen's agreements in the Junior High and Elementary schools in the city the following year, the

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<sup>2</sup> Green, *Mind*, 153.

<sup>3</sup> Redmond interview.

social divide among Protestant and Catholic children in Charlottetown was broken. This was most evident in the immediate end of the divide in the two main recreation centres, the YMCA and the Basilica, where even dances became integrated. Still it took the uniting of the universities, in September 1969, to solidify this change. Father Charles Cheverie, who taught biology at SDU and UPEI, said: "The consolidation of schools [w]as a progressive step that ensured that future generations were not marred by the same prejudices and belief structure that was held by their parents. . . . and this progress was solidified in the union of St. Dunstan's University and Prince of Wales College, and in the building of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital [in 1982]."<sup>4</sup>

Some lingering sectarian matters still remained to be resolved after the school and recreational centre divides ended. The most visible of these was the move to unite the two hospitals. It encountered some resistance, but it certainly did not generate the degree of sectarian wrangling that the school issues had. The uniting of the hospitals also ended the *raison d'être* for having two Medical Clinics in Charlottetown, and by the time the Catholic clinic had closed its doors in 1991 the divide among physicians was a thing of the past. Other significant manifestations of the divide that remained were the gentlemen's agreements in politics, the social and marital divide in the rural communities of the Island, and the fellowship barriers between the churches of the two great branches of the Christian faith. The first ended in 1996; inter-faith marriage and dating became quite common after the schools were united; rural communities continue to become increasingly mixed though many communities remain dominantly one faith or the other; and ecumenical relations have been generally good since Vatican II. After the dismantling of the *de facto* separate school system, the ending of these other barriers to community encountered little resistance.

Other factors were also at play in ending sectarian factionalism on P.E.I. The first

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<sup>4</sup> Cheverie interview by Ryan Gallant.

provisional step towards the true bridging events of the 1960s and 1970s was the implementation of the gentlemen's agreements. While on the one hand they institutionalized division and prevented, for the most part, close and friendly relations, on the other hand they allowed Protestants and Catholics to co-exist tolerably well beside each other and avoid the intense wrangling of the mid-1800s.

A major local influence was the Island's co-operative movement,<sup>5</sup> which began in 1936. It was primarily a Catholic led movement (particularly J. T. Croteau) but also had a significant number of Protestants in it, including Bram Chandler (the provincial librarian) and Charlie Richards of Murray Harbour. Richards' daughter, Nelda Murray, said "it is my sincere belief that it was the personality of Dr. Croteau which began the basics of fellowship and co-operation among the religious groups on P.E.I."<sup>6</sup> Of her father she noted that "he had contact with numerous people of either faith, we entertained as many Catholics as Protestants in our home," and they received Christmas cards from many Catholic leaders, including faculty at SDU and St Francis Xavier University.

More general forces in the wider world also impinged on the Island, and lessened sectarian tensions. Certainly the Island veterans of the World Wars discovered "foxhole fellowship," and that "war was the great leveller."<sup>7</sup> This fellowship continued after the wars in the Royal Canadian Legions, which knew no sectarian divide.<sup>8</sup> The war even made friends of Catholics and Orangemen. A letter written by an Islander one year after the First World War noted that: "The Orangemen had a service in the Presbyterian Church last Sunday for all the returned soldiers, they marched from the Orange Hall to the church and

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<sup>5</sup> See p 239, n 44.

<sup>6</sup> Nelda Murray of York, P.E.I. (originally Murray Harbour) , letter to author, Aug 31, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Kipping interview.

<sup>8</sup> Cf p 273.

back again after the service. . . . there were four Catholic boys in the parade Sunday and they seemed to enjoy it as much as the others did.”<sup>9</sup> Eric Kipping said his father was an Orangemen and that after the First World War, when he would meet this one particular priest that he had served alongside, they would embrace. Kipping’s impression was that there even a bigger change after the Second World War than after the first.<sup>10</sup> Island businessman Bill Beer was of the opinion that “the war made one hell of a difference in people’s outlook on life, after the experiences overseas.”<sup>11</sup> He also recalled that the matriculation classes for the returning veterans after the Second World War at PWC were mixed denominationally, which likewise in their own small way helped break down barriers. It is safe to assume that the war had a small leavening influence on sectarian attitudes among Islanders in general, but its main effect was restricted to those who served.

Technology also brought people closer together, whether it was the levelling influence of radio and television in the homes or the car making it so much easier to move outside of your own little enclave. Secularization, with its reduction of the social importance of religious commitment, also made its mark, even if it occurred at a slower pace and made less impact in this small, socially conservative province than it did elsewhere.<sup>12</sup>

At the religious level Vatican II (1962-5) effected one of the most significant sociological revolutions of the twentieth century, and its impact did not bypass P.E.I. Father Cheverie stated that Vatican II had “a huge impact” on the church in P.E.I., ushering in commissions of ecumenism, co-operation with other churches, and groups of

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<sup>9</sup> Edna Creed of Bridgetown, P.E.I., to Kate Sloane, April 25, 1919. PARO 3098/39.

<sup>10</sup> Kipping interview.

<sup>11</sup> Bill Beer of Charlottetown, interview by author, Feb 24, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> In the census of 1971 for Charlottetown only 1.2% said they were “no religion,” and this had risen to only 3.6% in 1981 and 7.3% in 2001. In 1981 over 90% were still affiliated with one of the five main denominations.

priests and ministers meeting together for dialogue. He felt that with its move away from ultramontane philosophy and its respect for other churches, it really helped to heal the wounds of the past.<sup>13</sup>

The ecumenical movement and Vatican II ushered in many examples of institutional and personal co-operation on the local level on P.E.I. The first of these was the ecumenical experiment conducted by the University Study Group in the fall of 1964, when three priests and four ministers met to see if they could agree on the uniting of the two schools of higher education. (They did agree.) A second example was seen in the establishment in Charlottetown of an inter-faith clerical group which in the mid to late 1960s met once a month at MacLauchlan's Motel for breakfast.<sup>14</sup> A third example was the Rural Development Council (1964-75).<sup>15</sup> In certain ways it picked up where the co-operative movement had left off. It had support from both Protestant and Catholic clergy, and significant participation from SDU's Extension Department, the Rural Life Committee of the United Church and the Women's Institute. "The original impulse for this movement came from [the Rev] David Barwise, United Church minister at Murray Harbour."<sup>16</sup> Barwise saw the Post Vatican II establishment of the Rural Development Council in Kings County as one factor that helped improve relations between Protestants and Catholics: "I believe our meetings and subsequent social actions had a significant part to play in the healing of prejudices between the Island Churches."<sup>17</sup> The final example is more personal, and is simply the story of the friendship between United Church minister (and later MP), the

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<sup>13</sup> Cheverie interview by Ryan Gallant, 13.

<sup>14</sup> Father Faber MacDonald of St John. N.B., conversation with author, Dec, 2004.

<sup>15</sup> See Wayne MacKinnon, Between Two Cultures (Stratford, P.E.I.: Tea Hill Press), 157-69 for an overview of its history.

<sup>16</sup> Nathan H. Mair, "The History of the Maritime Conference of the United Church of Canada," in Fractured Vision: Social Concern and Evangelism in the Maritime Conference of the United Church of Canada (Charlottetown: by the author, 1996), 77.

<sup>17</sup> David H. Barwise of Anglo-Rustico, P.E.I., letter to author, Aug 29, 2005.

Rev David MacDonald and Father Gerald Steele. They lived in Alberton and got along famously, so much so that their joint efforts led to them receiving national TV coverage in 1964.<sup>18</sup>

Today there is still a good spirit between leaders in the mainline Protestant churches and the Catholic church but less actual co-operative work than there was in the heyday of ecumenism in the decade following Vatican II,<sup>19</sup> due mostly to pastoral staff having had to re-focus their energy on internal matters. Meanwhile Evangelical-Catholic ecumenical activities began to rise in the 1980s as the two groups found common cause in the great social and moral debates of the time (sex education, abortion and homosexuality), and a common faith based on their high regard for the authority of scripture. On P.E.I. it was most vividly manifested in the inter-denominational movement to end abortions in the Charlottetown (1981) and Summerside hospitals (1986). These realities were reflected in a study by Nellie Plouffe. She interviewed eight Protestant clergymen in Charlottetown in 2007, three from mainline churches and five evangelicals. All of the pastors had participated in worship services, weddings and burials with Catholic clergy, and had no problem with this, but she uncovered a bigger divide between the 'liberal' and 'conservative' Protestants than between the Evangelicals and Catholics.<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps the most profound and moving example of the bridge on P.E.I. occurred on April 1, 2001, when David Adcock, a Charismatic pastor from South Hampton, England, apologized to the Island Acadians for the way the English had treated them during the expulsion of 1758.<sup>21</sup> Two years later Adcock paid a second visit to the Evangeline area in

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<sup>18</sup> D. MacDonald interview.

<sup>19</sup> For details see David Morrison, "Prince Edward Island Ecumenism: the Past Creates a New Era," *Ecumenism* (March/June 2004): 25.

<sup>20</sup> Nellie Plouffe, "Attitudes Towards Catholics Among the Protestant Clergy of the Charlottetown Area," April 10, 2007, found in "BColl."

<sup>21</sup> See *Debates of the Senate (Hansard)*, Vol 139, Issue 47 (June 13, 2001), p 1132; "English Pastor Apologizes to Acadians," *La Voix Acadienne*, May 30, 2001, available at

P.E.I., this time to the Sainte-Phillippe et Saint-Jacques Catholic Church in Egmont Bay.

What happened here may be unprecedented in Protestant-Catholic relations anywhere; certainly it was on P.E.I. At the Saturday evening mass on February 22, 2003, Father Eloi Arsenault had invited Adcock and Pastor Andrew Bryce of the Summerside Community Church to sit with him, behind the rail at the front of the church, and then in his sermon Adcock again asked forgiveness from the 400+ people in attendance for what his people had done. Following this Father Eloi served both the bread and wine to the two Protestant Pastors and then asked them to help serve it to the congregants.<sup>22</sup> Bryce enthused, "There were no barriers and the unity was HUGE."<sup>23</sup>

The Island had experienced eighty years of relative quiet in sectarian relations before the renewal of a second phase of open sectarian conflict in 1957, when societal forces necessitated a total modernization and re-vamping of the school system. In addressing these educational issues Islanders again came face to face with the religious tensions which lay hidden beneath them, and were thereby forced to confront the sectarian attitudes buried under the accommodative practices they had implemented following the end of the previous phase of educational battles in 1877. The end results of the two episodes of sectarian fighting over school issues, however, led to outcomes that were poles apart. The first led to a non-sectarian system of education in theory, the second to one in fact. The first led to an intricate system of written and unwritten gentlemen's agreements that would divide the two religious communities on the Island for nearly a century; the second led to an almost total elimination of this sociological divide.

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<http://archiver.rootsweb.ancestry.com/th/rcad/LA-FRENCH-GERMAN/2001-05/0990745869>.

<sup>22</sup> Andrew Bryce to David Damian, et al, email of Feb 26, 2003, contained in "BColl." All of this co-incided with a larger move of healing between the two faith groups that was then occurring in the country under the leadership of Damian's group known as "Watchmen for the Nations" (see their website – <http://www.watchmen.org/index.asp>).

<sup>23</sup> Bryce email.



While clearly the social environment in this period was much more conducive to a positive 'ecumenical' outcome in 1967 than it was in 1877, that is not sufficient to explain the difference in the results, as two comparisons make plain. The only other region in Canada with as high a level of elite accommodation as P.E.I. was Newfoundland, where the gentlemen's agreements in the schools extended until 1997. If P.E.I.'s leaders had not stared down the intense pressure to maintain the separate system, would not one then presume that the divide might have continued as long there as in Newfoundland? The other example is Northern Ireland, which had many of the same factors in operation in the first half of the 1960s as P.E.I. did. This included secularization, modernization, a whole new openness in ecumenical relations, and most significantly a prime minister (Terence O'Neill) who was pushing economic development (as P.E.I.'s Premier Campbell was) and seeking to end separate schools and the sectarian rift<sup>24</sup> (as P.E.I.'s University Study Group was). While the intensity of the battles in these two islands is quantitatively different enough to transform it into a qualitative one, there is more in common than first meets the eye. Northern Ireland had a genuine opportunity in the 1960s to bridge the divide but the intransigence of Paisleyite Protestantism and the outbreak of sectarian violence ended this. While there was no fear of another Belfast Riot on P.E.I., is it not quite possible that if the intransigence of some Islanders on both sides of the divide had been allowed to prevail in determining the elite's decisions on the school issues (and during this combative period the outcome was certainly far from assured), then the divide would have continued to matter? If even the two universities alone had not united, would not then both have been tempted in their battle for government and community support, to appeal to the only real reason for their continued separate existence – their sectarian peculiarities?

The effective handling of all of these school issues, in a way which firmly rejected

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<sup>24</sup> See O'Neill.

any compromise with sectarian concerns, seems to be the main reason why sectarianism in the Island declined as quickly as it did. While it is probably true that the rise of secularism and ecumenism, along with the shrinking sociological importance of the church in North America, would have eventually brought the sectarian spirit to an end, without the courageous stand taken by its leaders it would certainly have continued on much longer and caused much more personal and societal harm.

The sociological impact on the Island community of what happened during these decisive years has been dramatic, a reality that can only really be appreciated by Islanders who lived there before and after the divide. Roy Dickieson (b 1920) of New Glasgow, nicely expressed this truth:

I think the big thing, when Protestants and Roman Catholics got more together, was when they got the school system and college system . . . changed. That's when you start getting mixed marriages and so on. . . . That's when the differences started to break down I think. Older people, even though not part of the school system, started developing a greater tolerance, it had a ripple effect.<sup>25</sup>

More than anything it was the breaking down of this “anchor barrier to community” that opened up relations between Protestants and Catholics on the Island. While factors like the war, the co-operative movement, secularization, modernization and the ecumenical movement had an impact, there was not going to be any long term and deep change until the school divide was broken down, and when it was completed the other manifestations of the divide faded away almost immediately.

This is not to claim that there are no lingering elements of the religious party spirit on the Island but for the most part sectarianism is an issue of the past. This became quite evident to me in the process of doing research for my thesis. When I would mention my original thesis topic, “The Bridging of the Protestant - Catholic Divide on P.E.I.,” to Islanders over fifty I did not have to explain anything, but they all immediately started telling

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<sup>25</sup> Dickieson interview.

me stories about what it was like when they grew up. When I mentioned it to the younger generation, however, they would look at me quizzically and I would say, “You don’t have a clue what I am talking about, do you?” They invariably replied, “Not a clue.”<sup>26</sup> This amply illustrates how thoroughly the sectarian divide on the Island has been bridged.

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<sup>26</sup> Weale, Mercy, 5-6, makes a similar point.

## Conclusions

Perhaps the greatest shortcoming in most works on Protestant-Catholic relations is how little attention has been paid to the lived history of the man on the street, how the average Protestant and Catholic interacted on a day-to-day basis. This, of course, is the hardest thing to root out in historical research. Books, newspapers and government records naturally focus on society's leaders and the big issues; novels can give us a feel for everyday life but they are by definition fiction. Perhaps the only way to really get at this is through oral history. I have been uniquely well positioned to access a copious variety of oral sources, both that collected by Island historian David Weale and those I was able to gather on my own.

This oral component of my research can serve as a very useful model for doing similar ground level research in other areas, be it New Brunswick, Newfoundland or Scotland. It provides themes to be explored (such as the divide in schools, geography, businesses, dating), and a comparative body of material. So, for example, in mixed communities on P.E.I. where the schools were "separate" the two religious groups tended to be isolated in their own little enclaves, but where there was only a public school the two groups socialized quite freely. Was this pattern also at work elsewhere? Marion Bowman suggested to me that in her village of Old Kilpatrick, north of Glasgow, things did not work out in precisely this way. Though the Catholic children went to their separate schools, still friendships across the denominational divide were possible, and she described her community as "more mixed than divided." People could choose to live in their own enclaves, going only to church related groups, but there were also opportunities to mix. Two things, she said, that helped to break down the friendship wall were Scouts and Guides, and lawn bowls.<sup>1</sup> My goal in detailing this example is not to explain the differences

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<sup>1</sup> Bowman interview and email to author Nov 3, 2009.

but to simply show how using the Island model one has a strong basis for comparison and contrasts in pursuing similar research in other locales.

### Summary

The sectarian divide came to Prince Edward Island with the attitudinal baggage its French, English, Scottish and Irish settlers took with them to the New World. For the first eighty years after the English began their settlement, however, relations between Protestants and Catholics were reasonably good, really not much worse than between rival Protestant sects. This was due to a number of factors. First, the Island was settled just as the Penal Laws were beginning to be overturned and the few Penal Laws instituted were never enforced, excluding the vote and most public offices being forbidden to Catholics. Second, the spirit of tolerance between the two groups in the lands of their forefathers and in the great nation to the south during the period of “borrowed peace” spread even to this far outpost of the Empire. Third, ultramontane attitudes did not become dominant in the Catholic Church on the Island until Peter McIntyre was appointed the Bishop in 1860. The first two bishops ministered more in the old style of Scotland’s priests, trying to ensure that as far as possible they did not offend the majority Protestant community. It was not until the 1850s and 1860s then that the Protestants really started to feel threatened by the vigorous, confident and growing Catholic church in their midst. Fourth, the demands of pioneer life generally overrode sectarian rivalries. Last, but by no means least, the local clergy during this period, on both sides, exhibited a spirit of charity, kindness and fraternity that was sorely lacking later, and which was both appreciated and imitated by their flock.

During the 1840s things continued on the same peaceful path but there were a few signs of tension creeping in, particularly around education issues and the conflict between some Irish Catholic tenants and their Protestant landlords. Still, there was no serious

conflict until hundreds of Scottish Protestants and Irish Catholics fought each other in a field in Belfast one winter's day. This was the pivotal event that brought to light the sectarian feelings and attitudes that Islanders had, for the most part, successfully buried in the first eighty years of living under British control. Immediately following it serious sectarian tension became part of Island life, reaching its climax in the education battles of 1856-77, which was used by politicians (particularly the less popular Conservative Party) to curry votes. The Island as a result had its political parties more divided on a sectarian basis than any other part of the British Empire, including Newfoundland. One of the central and unique claims of this thesis is that the sectarian wars on the Island did not begin with the Bible Question of 1856 but with the Belfast Riot of 1847. Islanders in general became wary of the 'other camp' and politicians immediately began to foster these suspicions in their attempts to gain voters, though it took the outbreak of the Bible Question before this ploy began to pay huge political dividends.

Two things brought these wars to an end. First, a riot between the Orange and Green in the summer of 1877 which could easily have led to deaths, was so effectively handled by the authorities that peace was quickly restored and there were no long term repercussions. Second, and more importantly, the education issues were all settled legislatively and through gentlemen's agreements. Even though the Catholics failed to achieve their educational goals at the ballot box they did get their separate school system through a backroom agreement between the Premier and the Bishop.

These 'gentlemen's agreements' became entrenched in Island life until they began to be undone in the 1960s. During this time of elite accommodation the Island was a very divided society. People were segregated by community, by schooling, in some of their recreational and fraternal pursuits, and even to some degree in their shopping patterns. Politics were no longer divided by sect but gentlemen's agreements ensured quite precisely

the number of Protestants and Catholics in the House and Cabinet, and patronage was carefully doled out to make sure each sect got a reasonably fair share of the pie.

Many factors contributed to the bridging of the divide on the Island, some of which were equally at work elsewhere, not least among them Vatican II and the ecumenical movement, still the most important factor was the successful resolution of the second round of education wars that beset the Island from 1957-69. Most important among these were the consolidation of rural schools, which resulted in previously isolated Catholic and Protestant children mixing freely in their new schools; the intentional breakdown of the gentlemen's agreements in the public schools in Charlottetown and Summerside; and the uniting of the two universities. The ending of the medical and hospital divide in Charlottetown (1982) and the dual riding system (1996) went relatively smoothly after these 'anchor' educational issues were resolved. Today there are no institutional divides on the Island, outside of specifically religious ones, and only small traces of residual sectarian feelings even at the personal level. On the ecumenical front, meanwhile, examples of inter-faith co-operation are so common as to be no longer newsworthy.

### Comparisons and Contrasts

The anti-Catholic and anti-Protestant spirits found on P.E.I. were, of course, in many ways the same spirits that existed in the United Kingdom and the British settlements in the New World. Their evolution in these places followed the same general pattern, though Ireland, Quebec, Wales, the southern United States and the western frontier had significant deviations from it. This was due primarily either to the size of their Catholic population or in the case of the latter the late period in which they were settled.<sup>2</sup>

Occasionally there are some useful comparisons and contrasts to be drawn with the

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<sup>2</sup> Refer to pp 8ff.



exceptional cases but not surprisingly the most fruitful parallels are with those regions which followed the same general pattern. Yet, even these areas exhibited many local variations within the general themes. The first factor which gave rise to these differences was what was taking place in the United Kingdom at the time a new world colony was being settled. In general the earlier a North American colony was settled by Britain the greater was the anti-Catholic sentiment found there, but the local circumstances (notably in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Upper Canada) prevent this from being a hard and fast rule. This segues nicely into the second factor, which was the local peculiarities at play in each colony, including geography, ethnic mix, immigration patterns, politics, economics, community leaders and historical circumstances. Because of these two factors the nature of the relationship between Catholics and Protestants evolved somewhat differently in each area of the New World.

Anti-Catholicism was strongest in English-speaking North America in the Thirteen Colonies and Newfoundland, both which began to be settled in the early-1600s when Papists were still being killed in England and Huguenots in France, and the Penal Codes were still strictly applied. The Thirteen Colonies, except as noted above and in the American South in the nineteenth century, fit well into the general pattern, but their two foundational historical events greatly altered the expression of the sectarian spirit there. During the War of Independence they were allied with France and became quite favourably disposed to Catholics, and as a result Catholics were given full political rights long before they received them in the Atlantic Provinces and the United Kingdom. Then from about 1835-57 they experienced virulent anti-Catholicism and many deadly sectarian riots, but their sectarian wars ended earlier than in British North America and Britain when a bigger issue, the Civil War, took over American's attention.

The Penal Laws were never as severe in Newfoundland as in the American colonies.

The British discouraged settlement in Newfoundland, and so it was not really until the first half of the eighteenth century that its Penal Laws were established. By this time attitudes had softened in England and as a result the Penal Laws, and their subsequent enforcement in Newfoundland, were more lenient than in the Thirteen Colonies. Even so they were more severe than in any other Canadian colony, which were not established until the latter half of the eighteenth century. At the end of the Penal Law Period local peculiarities took precedence and resulted in Newfoundland's Catholics having for a time (1784-1825) more rights than most of their counterparts in the Empire, but this was then followed by a few years (1825-32) when they had less. The peculiarity was that Newfoundland had no representative government until 1832, and when Westminster established a local Executive Council in 1825 they refused the Governor's request to have Catholic representatives on it. So when emancipation was proclaimed in 1829 they, for three years, were the only North American colony where Catholics were officially excluded from political office. The discontent which then arose in Newfoundland's Catholic community over this exclusion proved to be a key factor in Newfoundland being the first place to experience the sectarian wars of the mid-1800s, especially when it coincided with the arrival in 1830 of an ultramontane Bishop who was not averse to making his voice heard on the political stage.

Local factors somewhat skew the chronological factor in the other Atlantic Provinces as well. Nova Scotia, being settled in 1749, definitely had the most severe penal laws in the Maritime Provinces, but the influx of American Loyalists after the War of Independence and its local leadership soon put it at the forefront in Britain and her colonies in seeking full civil rights for Catholics. New Brunswick, though settled shortly after P.E.I., experienced the worst sectarian violence of the three Maritime Provinces. This was due to the large number of Irish Protestants in that province, the great influence of the Orange Order and its unique immigration patterns (which saw the Acadians settled mostly in the

northern part of the province and a huge influx of Irish famine victims to the Saint John area in the 1840s). P.E.I.'s smallness also almost necessitated that people lived at least in superficial harmony. So the violence witnessed in New Brunswick had only two comparable instances on P.E.I.

The chronological factor in settlement holds true for Western Canada, which first started to see a significant influx of immigrants after the end of the intense anti-Catholicism in Britain *ca* 1870, and therefore it experienced much less of the divide than eastern Canada. Local factors, though, also came into play here as well, including the exportation of Ontario's Protestant and Orange values to Manitoba and the Riel Rebellions. It, therefore, experienced its sectarian wars (1870-97) much later than the rest of Canada.

One local factor, that of isolation, made its influence felt in similar ways in the two most isolated colonies, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland. First, the major anti-Catholic issues and expressions (Papal Aggression, Guy Fawkes Day,<sup>3</sup> the controversies surrounding the nunneries, anti-Catholic literature such as *Maria Monk*, travelling anti-Catholic speakers), which were so evident in Britain, Ontario and the U.S.A., made little impact on these islands. This is well illustrated in P.E.I.'s case by the visit to the Island (about 1868) of the well-known anti-Catholic preacher, Father Charles Chiniquy (1809-99), and his follow-up letter. While his private letter was publicly disseminated, there is no evidence that either it or his tour made any appreciable indent on the minds of local Protestants.<sup>4</sup>

Second, the sectarian battles in these isolated colonies were much less driven by outside political events than was the case for those colonies which were more in touch with the mother country. Nova Scotia's sectarian wars were precipitated by concerns

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<sup>3</sup> Newfoundland is unlike P.E.I. here, Bonfire Night is still celebrated there.

<sup>4</sup> MacMillan, 1835-91, p 281.

surrounding the Crimean War. In New Brunswick they were driven by the large influx of Irish famine refugees coming into a province that already had a fully functioning Orange Order. In both New Brunswick and Ontario the Orange Order was established by the Protestant Irish prior to any significant sectarian problems arising in these communities, and it can be seen as a contributing cause of them. These two places became the largest per capita centres of Orangeism outside of Ireland and the Order was almost always involved in the violent clashes that occurred there. In P.E.I. and Newfoundland the Order arose primarily among Protestant Scotsmen as a defensive response to the perceived Catholic threat, and only after the sectarian battles were in full swing, and it was not therefore at the heart of the troubles near to the same degree. Ontario, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick were all greatly affected by the Fenian scare that originated south of the border, and it even became an important factor in their decision to confederate with Canada, but it caused but few ripples in P.E.I.<sup>5</sup> and Newfoundland. The clearest example of the impinging of outside influences on a colony is seen in Ontario, whose sectarian wars were precipitated by the Papal Aggression issue in England. While Island papers kept their readers informed of Catholic - Protestant conflicts around the world (Papal Aggression, Maynooth, sectarian riots, etc) such events seem to have made little indelible impact there, all of the sectarian battles being driven rather by local issues and concerns. Even the debate over Catholic emancipation in 1826 had a strictly local cause, and while the controversy surrounding it in England and Ireland in 1828 and 1829 was well covered in the local press it did not cause any ripples there.

Third, the degree of isolation affected how long the divide continued in each province. Most sectarian concerns were resolved in England, Ontario and Nova Scotia by

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<sup>5</sup> See Edward MacDonald, "Who's Afraid of the Fenians? The Fenian Scare on Prince Edward Island, 1865-67," *Acadiensis* 38 (Winter/Spring 2009): 33-51; the *Parliamentary Reporter*, 1866 (pp 56-61); *David Ross Diary* 43, 44.

the 1950s, but they continued until the end of the next decade on P.E.I. and went even longer in the most isolated colony in Canada, Newfoundland, separate schooling continuing there until 1997. In 2008 I was working beyond the “Bridge to Nowhere” in northern Alberta, where the majority of the work force was from Newfoundland. The youth in their early-twenties still had definite memories of the divide, quite unlike anything one would find elsewhere in Canada, and the older generation still exhibited much more sensitivity around the issue than is the case in the rest of the Maritime Provinces, where the divide is much more safely behind them.

The most useful parallels to the situation on P.E.I. from its founding up until the 1960s can be found in the other two Maritime Provinces. They were settled in the same general era, all had significant Acadian populations which had suffered through the expulsion, and all had significant numbers of Scottish and Irish immigrants. The buried sectarian passions were brought to the surface in all three places by violent incidents. The strongest political figure of the day used the sectarian troubles to further his party’s political ends, though W. H. Pope seemed more Machiavellian than Joseph Howe. Much of the same anti-Catholic rhetoric was employed by Protestants in all three colonies: on the political front there was concern over the rising influence of Catholics in politics, the threat to liberty if Catholicism became dominant, and the need for Protestants to unite against this threat; on the theological side there were attacks on transubstantiation, the confessional, restrictions placed on Bible study, Catholic ‘superstitions’ and the infallibility of the Pope. All rejected separate schools in the 1860s and 1870s, all resorted to gentlemen’s agreements to bring about peace between the two communities, and it was the ending of these agreements in the school system which was mainly responsible for breaking down the dividing walls in the 1950s and 1960s.

Still there were significant differences as well, most notably the following. P.E.I.

(like Newfoundland) had nearly equal numbers of Protestants and Catholics, while in the other two provinces they were less than 25%. This made the Catholic threat to the Protestant ascendancy in the two Islands much more tangible, and is probably the main factor in them being so far behind the other two Maritime Provinces in granting Catholics the vote, and in having more extended education wars. The dominance of the Anglican elite was more pronounced in the other three Atlantic Provinces than it was in P.E.I., and so it did not experience as high a level of feuding between rival Protestant sects as they did. The issue of endowment of post-secondary schools was never an issue in Nova Scotia because all of the denominational schools received equal government support. The main endowment debates in Nova Scotia had in fact been between Dissenters and the established school of Kings in Windsor. P.E.I. felt almost no impact from the terrific influx of famine Irish in the mid-1840s, and the competition for jobs was not much of a factor there, it being largely an agrarian society. Finally, the sectarian wars died more readily in Nova Scotia than they did in P.E.I. and New Brunswick, probably due to several factors: sectarian violence in Nova Scotia never resulted in any dead bodies; Nova Scotia more effectively resolved their school issues than the two sister provinces did;<sup>6</sup> and the new Archbishop Thomas Connolly who came in 1858 was of a more irenic and less ultramontane spirit than P.E.I.'s Bishop McIntyre.

Given that P.E.I. is the most Scottish province in Canada it is a little surprising that Scotland provides poor parallels to the Island. This is perhaps mostly due to Catholics in Scotland being such a small minority prior to the immigration of the Irish in the first half of the nineteenth century, allowing Protestants there to direct more effort and concern into sorting out their own sub-divisions than their differences with Catholics. Even after their arrival, however, the Catholic community itself was ethnically divided, the long time

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<sup>6</sup> See Xavier 63-74.

resident Scottish Catholics being nearly as likely to resent the invasion of the poverty stricken Irishman as was their Protestant countryman. As such Scotland never had an exclusive Catholic political agenda, and the Catholics thus posed no real threat to motivate Protestants into social closure as they did in P.E.I., Newfoundland and Northern Ireland.

The geography of the divide in each place also leads to few useful comparisons, though both places exhibit a pattern of pockets of numerical dominance; but these areas are few for Catholics in Scotland, while they are plentiful for Catholics on the Island. Certain areas in the Highlands and Islands, particularly, are dominantly Catholic. Catholics in places like South Uist and Barra experienced significant religious persecution and oppression prior to the Catholic Relief Bill of 1793 (and many of them, as a result of this, emigrated to P.E.I.); but the Scottish Catholics on the Island suffered from few real disabilities beyond not having the franchise, and do not even seem to have made public reference to their former oppression until about a century after it happened. While there are no parallels to be drawn here the two places do share one common feature related to their demography. In communities in the past two centuries where one group was in almost total dominance numerically (e.g., much of north-east Scotland) there were good relations between the majority and the few representatives of the minority group.

Scotland likewise had little of the elite accommodation evident on the Island, and though its bridging period began earlier (just after World War II), it has been far less complete. Certainly there is no significant Island parallel to modern Glasgow, with its tribal groupings and serious violence centered around its two football clubs, Celtic and Rangers. Neither does P.E.I. have the lesser manifestations of sectarianism prevalent in Scotland today; the Hibs and Hearts rivalry in Edinburgh and the continued Orange marches there; the opinion among many that discrimination against Catholics is still a fact of life there; the view of some older Highland Calvinists who still believe that the Pope is the anti-Christ; or

the pockets of strong evangelical anti-Catholicism among ministers like the late Jack Glass.

The contrast in schooling is also pronounced. Since 1878 Catholics have had both funding for their schools and autonomy in the recruitment and training of teachers, and “in no other predominantly Protestant country did Catholics enjoy such latitude in the educational sphere.”<sup>7</sup> Where P.E.I. had a divided higher education system and united teacher training, Scotland had the reverse, and it is perhaps to be wondered whether the separate teacher training has played a role in the continued survival of the divide in Scotland. Clearly the entrenchment of the Catholic School system in the country has played its part, as Gallagher noted: “Separate schools helped to encourage the survival of the overall religious divide in Scottish society. Without them, the assimilation of Catholic and non-Catholic children in Scotland would undoubtedly have occurred at a faster rate.”<sup>8</sup> It is here that the lesson of the Island for places like Scotland and Northern Ireland is most pronounced: if you want to root out sectarianism you have to educate children of all faiths together.<sup>9</sup>

England likewise provides few useful parallels to the Island. The Victorian Englishman was in many ways as anti-Catholic as his Protestant Irish compatriot but this spirit waned in the former with the decline in the importance of a religious world view. Also the rise of liberal theology in the Protestant churches meant fewer people held traditional views. As a result England’s differentiation became directed more at ethnicity in the twentieth century, and so resistance to Irish Catholics in the 1950s and during the “Troubles” had more of an anti-Irish feel than an anti-Catholic one. One positive consequence of this was that no longer did anti-Irish sentiment get projected on to English

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<sup>7</sup> Gallagher 103. Only in Ireland, Quebec, Newfoundland and to a lesser degree Ontario did Catholics have it so good, but they had large Catholic populations.

<sup>8</sup> Gallagher 286.

<sup>9</sup> Still the examples of Ontario, Alberta and Southern Ireland show that you can have separate schools and a fairly unified society.



Catholics. Pluralism also played a huge role in England, especially its capital city. Ulster, until quite recently, continued to have a binary divide but London had much earlier become “pluralistic in its social cleavages.”<sup>10</sup> With the arrival of a vast array of ethnic minorities in the 1900s London was transformed from a dominantly Protestant city with a small but visible Catholic population, to one of the most religiously pluralistic cities in the world (the same forces were at work in Toronto). This, and the fall of the Empire, led to a change in the Englishman’s sense of who he was. Protestantism had contributed much to the Englishman’s sense of identity and helped provide social cohesion during the rise of the British Empire, but today it no longer does. As John Wolffe noted:

Patriotism acquired an edge of absolute spiritual claims which led it to the threshold of a nationalism that equated the cause of Britain with the cause of God. This mood was at its height in the first decade and a half of the twentieth century, before the chastening experience of the Great War, but it continued in more muted form into the middle decades of the twentieth century.<sup>11</sup>

National myths, or whatever remain of them, are no longer primarily religious in England. As such, whatever anti-Catholicism remains in England is just at the level of ideas and no longer interwoven into the very fabric of the culture.

There is not much commonality between what happened in P.E.I. and its founding nation.<sup>12</sup> Obviously neither pluralism, nor the decline in Empire and the subsequent change in national myth, were a factor in the ending of sectarianism on the Island, and though secularism and liberal theology definitely did play a role it was not as large as in England and Scotland, probably because it was the least secular and theologically liberal province in

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<sup>10</sup> Brewer and Higgins 219. I am indebted to this source for a number of the insights in this paragraph.

<sup>11</sup> John Wolffe, God and Greater Britain: Religion and National Life in Britain and Ireland 1843–1945 (London: Taylor & Francis, 1994),

<sup>12</sup> Perhaps the most useful parallel may surprisingly be found in Northern Ireland in the 1960s, with Prime Minister O’Neill’s attempt to bridge the divide there. Much of what he was doing was paralleled in what Premier Alex Campbell and the University Study Group were doing, but this is outside the purview of this thesis.

Canada. The general tenor of Protestant-Catholic relations in the mother country did impact the Island somewhat in its first century of existence but there are few useful parallels to be drawn between the two places beyond that.

One potentially fruitful area of comparison involves the use of elite accommodation in P.E.I. and most of the rest of Canada, and the almost total disregard for this approach in the United Kingdom and the USA, during what I term the period of the gentlemen's agreements / sectarianism's half-life (*ca* 1877-1967). Protestant-Catholic relations in the Maritimes at this time, and in Ontario and Manitoba after 1897, certainly exhibited less tension and outward animosity than was evident during the same time period in the north-eastern United States, Ireland, western Scotland, the Lancashire area of England and even Wales. The only place which practised elite accommodation and witnessed a roughly equivalent level of sectarian animosity to these areas, after the end of the sectarian wars period, was Newfoundland. That was not due, however, to the ineffectiveness of the agreements there but to the depth and intensity of its divide, which in terms of both its length and severity was probably second only to Northern Ireland in the United Kingdom and English-speaking North America. The absolute necessity of these agreements to achieve the goal of sectarian peace in Newfoundland was well demonstrated when their leader's reverted back to it so quickly after the Harbour Grace riots in 1883.

While the gentlemen's agreements institutionalized and entrenched the sectarian divide in Canada, and in some ways even prolonged and fed it, they were also a necessary first step in breaking it down. A way to end the bitter sectarian wrangling of the mid-1800s, with its attendant political ramifications, was desperately needed, and given the deep suspicions each side had of the other at the time there was probably no other solution which would have worked as effectively as did the agreements. They provided a mechanism for a fairly even sharing of political patronage and power, in spite of the balance being nearly

always slightly tilted in favour of the 'ascendant' Protestants. There is no doubt that without these agreements the sectarian animosity in the Atlantic Provinces would have been far more intense after 1885 than it in fact was. These comparisons certainly raise the possibility that if the areas of the United Kingdom and the USA in which Catholics formed a substantial minority had likewise used some form of elite accommodation, then they too might have experienced less sectarian violence and enmity. It is particularly hard to imagine any scenario for Northern Ireland where some form of elite accommodation would not have reduced its sectarian tensions.

### The Central Issue

While there are naturally enough many similarities and contrasts to be drawn between Protestant-Catholic relations on P.E.I. and elsewhere, perhaps most worthy of note is that nowhere else were educational issues so thoroughly at the heart of the divide. Education issues were prominent elsewhere, for example, in Philadelphia and New York in the 1840s, in Manitoba in the 1890s, in Oregon in the 1920s, and the United Kingdom in regard to the Maynooth Grant in the mid-1800s, but nowhere else were the school issues so tightly intertwined with the sectarian divide, and nowhere else was it more necessary to have the separate school system abolished in order to break down the divide, though the same was nearly equally true for the other Atlantic Provinces.

While the birth of the divide on the Island was not the result of an education issue, such as the school question of 1845, but was triggered by the violent upheaval in Belfast, the events that really entrenched it were the school questions of 1856-77. And while the geography of the divide was due to settlement patterns and not educational decisions, still school segregation solidified this disconnection. Where large communities were mixed ways were found to divide on the basis of sect, thoroughly grounded in the separate school

agreements. The fact that the divide was significantly less in communities where schools were mixed well illustrates its centrality in the perseverance of the divide. As such the segregated school system really did become P.E.I.'s "anchor barrier" on which other barriers relied, such as the Basilica / YMCA recreation center divide. If it had not been confronted head on it is likely that the general societal forces would have taken a significantly longer time to break down the sectarian walls, and been much less thorough, as the contrasting examples of Newfoundland and Scotland show.

The first round of severe sectarian wrangling on the Island (1856-77) was centered on education, as was the second round (1957-69). The inter-faith peace that had been sustained for eighty years by the gentlemen's agreements was threatened as the necessity of modernizing and upgrading their education system was forced upon Islanders. The community's leaders this time, however, did not resort to the expediency of elite accommodation to resolve the sectarian tensions but bravely stared them down, and in doing so effectively ended sectarian animosity on the Island. While the cultural milieu (Vatican II, secularization, new technologies, etc) made circumstances much more favourable for detente, this in itself was no guarantee of securing the end of the sectarian party spirit (witness Northern Ireland, Glasgow and Newfoundland). The "anchor barrier to community" on the Island had to be removed, the dividing walls in its "non-sectarian" school system had to be broken down. When they were, Protestants and Catholics on the Island discovered immediately that good friends and good partners were as easily found in the other group as they were in their own.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### “THE BELFAST RIOT”

According to Malcolm MacQueen in 1929 the Belfast Riot song was twelve stanzas long, with eight lines per stanza.<sup>1</sup> It was passed down orally as a song and the oldest extant copy (Bruce, see below) likely dates to at least fifty years after the song was first composed. These copies seem to have been circulated, discreetly, from one Scottish Protestant to another. I have collected eight slightly different versions of this song. All tell the same story, there is very little variation in line order, but the wording is not precisely the same in any of them. Still these differences are minor and do not affect the meaning or interpretation in any way.

After comparing them closely I deem the hand-written version found at PARO (RG 4180) and MacQueen's (p 32, cf 113) to be the most authentic. There are, however, defects in both of these. A couple of lines were lost in transcription in the former, and the latter only has the first two stanzas. These two versions are in substantial agreement with those passed on to me by historian Boyde Beck and Lorne Lea of the Belfast area, as well as the one sent into the Charlottetown Guardian on Dec 15, 1972 (by a Mr Ross of Flat River), and the version collected by Island folklorist Randy Dibblee.<sup>2</sup> Dibblee received the song from Stanley Bruce, a musician born in the 1930s, whose great-grandfathers were in the riot. Bruce said it had been passed down to his family from an elderly neighbour. It is

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<sup>1</sup> MacQueen 32. See p 142 for further discussion on authorship and date.

<sup>2</sup> “The Belfast Riot,” in Randall and Dorothy Dibblee, eds, Folksongs from Prince Edward Island (Summerside: Williams and Crue, 1973).

therefore quite an old version but is also not without defect as, according to Bruce, the Dibbles made a few minor errors in transcribing the handwritten document.<sup>3</sup> There is also a typed version at PARO (# 4679), which has 9 stanzas. For the most part it is very similar to the 12 stanza version at PARO, excluding of course the deleted portions. There is also a version collected by a Valerie Walkin of P.E.I., which is twelve verses, but shows much corruption. It has a significantly different order from the other versions, especially at the end, and in many places is paraphrased (for example, “went to hell or to Connaught” is rendered “went to hell or to heaven”).

The rendering below follows that of Dibblee. The order of the verses and each line in it are in complete agreement with PARO 4180, MacQueen, Beck and Lea, but the wording is sometimes different. Where this is the case I have generally followed the readings of the former two. A comparison of Dibblee with these other versions demonstrates that Bruce was correct in his critique of it. For example, Dibblee rendered Stanza 10, line 5, as “the Scotchmen remained,” where every other version, even Walkin, had the rhyming “the Scotch remain master.” Following textual criticism principles I also preferred the readings which were more difficult (e.g., shapen over sharpened, and lyon over lion) or had older Scottish terms (e.g., claymore over clamour).

1. Come brethren all lend an ear to my story,  
And naught but the truth unto you will I tell.  
Concerning a fight that's recorded in story,  
And of that brave hero who on that day fell.  
In yon place of Belfast with hilt and with claymore,  
The sons of old Scotia in plenty were found.  
With thistle and lyon and bright banner flying,  
And piper's long streamer and pibrochs resound.

2. The first of March being the day of election,  
The year '47 I heard them all say.  
The Irish assembled from every direction,  
Each one with his weapon concealed in his sleigh.

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<sup>3</sup> Stanley Bruce interview.

To drive from the hustings with cudgel well shapen,  
 All who for brave Donald would vote on that day.  
 But that day, three to one, they were badly mistaken,  
 Our noble Scotch heroes made them all run away.

3. The deceitful treachery first will I mention,  
 By putting in practice to throw off their guard.  
 The Scotch they well knew would be loyal and true,  
 And they feared that their blows would be heavy and hard.  
 But eight days before to the minister's door,  
 The priest came up driving with his horse and sleigh.  
 The Irish deceiver was cordially welcomed,  
 And treated him well while there he did stay.

4. That wolf in sheep's clothing the good man deceived,  
 There would be no fight in honour declared.  
 The brave loving man believed the imposter,  
 And being blindfolded no Scotchman prepared.  
 For he on the Sabbath told his congregation,  
 To keep peace, and order, and what they should do.  
 'Twas little they knew of the great preparation,  
 Was then made by the men of the blood thirsty crew.

5. At Newtown the Priest called and there held a meeting,  
 Just two days before the election took place.  
 For to have their sins pardoned and grant them a blessing,  
 The mark of the beast stamped on every face.  
 Packed up in their boxes they brought their shillelaghs,  
 Each one being labelled with its owner's name.  
 Over which the priest prayed and granted a blessing,  
 and with holy water sprinkled the same.

6. The Irish next morning, all heretics scorning,  
 Might proudly be seen with their banners so green.  
 And foremost a flag with a bunch of white pendants,  
 Underneath the description might plainly be seen.  
 "All hail, queen of heaven, grant us a returning,  
 With a great and a glorious grand victory.  
 And a twenty pound candle each year shall be burning,  
 Holy Virgin, so long as we live, unto thee."

7. Before I go further, without hesitation,  
 To you I will mention how they on that day,  
 Did murder, without the slightest provocation,  
 The bold and undaunted brave Malcolm MacRae.  
 While going to vote he was met by a party,  
 Of bloodthirsty Irishmen, twenty or more.  
 Who beat him without either favour or mercy,  
 And left him for dead, enveloped in gore.



8 The news quickly spread and without second telling,  
 The Scotchmen prepared and advanced in a line.  
 The Irish were there like fiends of hell yelling,  
 To murder all Scotchmen – it was their design.  
 Like tigers they fought till they got the best licking,  
 That ever poor Irishmen got – it is true.  
 There never was known such clouting and kicking,  
 Since the days of “Auld Bonnie” at famed Waterloo.

9 Like tigers they fought till they could fight no longer,  
 Still thinking their numbers would carry the day.  
 But the Scotchmen they found to be tougher and stronger,  
 Than what they supposed in commencing the fray.  
 In one sleigh alone, it is well known whatever,  
 That seven were hauled away dead from the grounds.  
 And twenty more went to hell or to Connaught,  
 Their graves to this day have never been found.

10. On the pages of fame it should be recorded,  
 Twas a great and glorious grand victory!  
 Our conquering heroes should all be rewarded,  
 They were but one hundred, the Irish were three.  
 The fight being ended the Scotch remain master,  
 And not even one of their number had fell.  
 Not so with the Irish, they met a disaster,  
 Which many a mother or widow can tell.

11. Like frightened sheep, in a body they started,  
 They thought wings too slow - had they any to fly.  
 The flag they so proudly did wave in the morning,  
 Was wrapped round the wounded who never would rise.  
 The loss they sustained was never revealed,  
 Their killed and their wounded they hid out of sight.  
 In the woods and the snow banks they had them concealed,  
 And they hauled them away in the dead hours of night.

12. Great praise is given to the brave John McLennan,  
 Who fought like a trojan the sticks to prepare.  
 Long life and long health to the undaunted heroes,  
 Who with them sent pieces of skulls in the air.  
 And may they now ever the good cause defending,  
 Like one be united in brotherly love.  
 And may the great I Am on them be sending,  
 Peace, plenty and blessing from heaven above.

## APPENDIX B

### “ORAL HISTORY MAP:

#### DISTRIBUTION OF PROTESTANTS AND CATHOLICS ON P.E.I.”

The attached coloured map is meant to give an approximate demographic religious profile of the Island. I call it an oral history map because most of it is the work of my Seniors College of P.E.I. Class in the fall of 2007. I divided the approximately twenty-five Islanders in the class into three groups, according to the county in which they were raised. I then asked them to mark each community as to the percentage of Protestants and Catholics they felt were in it, the time period being roughly the first six decades of the twentieth century (when the Island's community's were relatively stable demographically). Paul O'Connor then took their responses and developed a first draft of the map.

I then refined and improved this through four main means. First, I had different groups and individuals review their work, including my Seniors College class of 2008 and individuals such as Faith Pacquet of Souris and Mark Doucette of Rustico. Second, in the process of my research I had gathered bits of geographic data from people I had interviewed, the “Weale Collection,” and books and articles I had read, and I then compared these to the map. Third, I compared the map to the census data of 1921, which gives the denominational breakdown by lot and some key communities. This was especially helpful for the latter but not so much for the former, because there was often little correlation between the lots and settlement patterns. I also compared the 1871 census for the breakdown by electoral district and the 2001 census for the breakdown by community. All

of these led to some minor modifications in details but also demonstrated that the work of the original group was quite solid.

In the end this is not a scientifically precise map, except for the eighteen lots that were either 90%+ Catholic or Protestant in the 1921 and / or 1951 censuses, and the nine larger communities for which the denominational breakdown is given. It is not, however, therefore to be deemed less valuable, for it in fact goes beyond the limitations inherent in such a product. There is no collated population data that breaks down the smaller rural communities by denomination, so the only way to get at this is through “the neighbours.” And the neighbours were good, for which I will offer up but one anecdote. The second group of Seniors were thinking Indian River should be changed from 60-90% Catholic to 90%+. They then started to mentally review each home in the area, by the names of those who used to live there, realized that had overlooked a few Protestants down one particular side road, and when they totalled up the numbers agreed that the original group had in fact got it right.

The map is colour coded as follows, the symbolism of the first and last colours being fairly obvious:

- Orange - Protestant (90%+)
- Blue - Protestant (60-90%)
- Yellow - Protestant or Catholic (40-60 %, roughly evenly divided)
- Purple - Catholic (60-90%)
- Green - Catholic (90%+)

The dividing lines were not drawn to be geographically precise; the main goal was to keep the whole name of a community within its colour code.

The map demonstrates that by far the greater part of the Island was either Orange or Green, mixed areas were few and scattered. It also shows that both groups were spread through all three counties, but lived for the most part in definite pockets of Catholic predominance (eastern and western tips of the Island, the Evangeline and Tracadie areas)

and Protestant predominance (southern Kings, central Queens, east Prince). This means the two main faith communities dwelt, to use the Island slang, "side by each." The map also shows that most of the larger towns were mixed. The seven towns singled out in the 1921 census accounted for about 22% of the population. Even, however, if we added the other co-mingled areas to these seven mixed towns it is still clear that the majority of Islanders, throughout most of its history, lived in either a Catholic or a Protestant community. What the map fails to show is that even in some mixed communities, particularly Charlottetown and Summerside, there were geographic sub-divisions, such that even there the two groups generally dwelt in their own little enclaves.

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# Distribution of Protestants and Catholics on Prince Edward Island

